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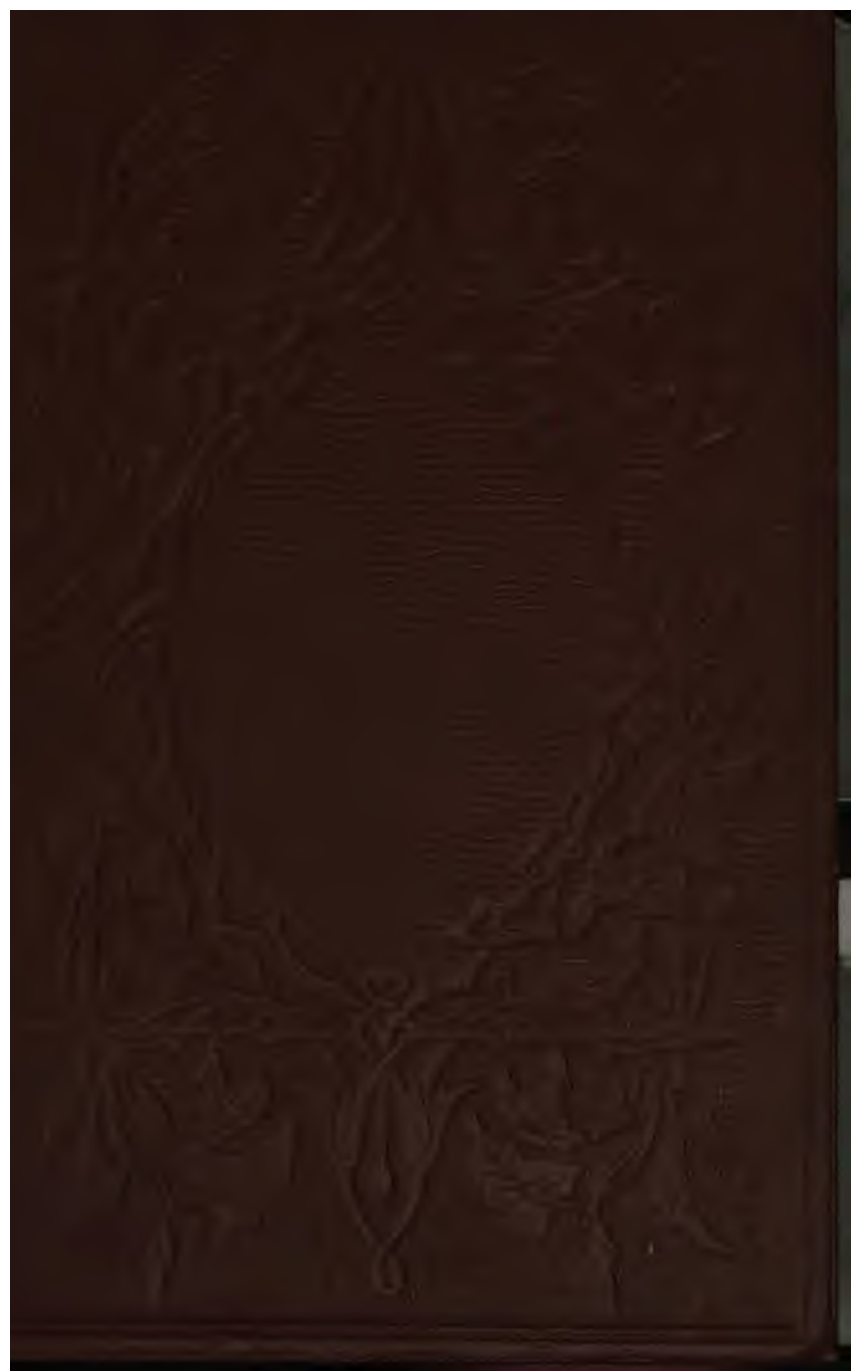
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CLARA HOWARD.

A Tale.

EDINBURGH :
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK.

CLARA HOWARD:

OR,

HEART YEARNINGS FOR THE UNSEEN
AND THE ABIDING.



LONDON:
JAMES NISBET AND CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
M.DCCC.LVI.

249. u. 54.



CLARA HOWARD.

CHAPTER I.

"Woman all exceeds
In ardent sanctitude and pious deeds ;
And chief in woman charities prevail,
That soothe when sorrows or disease assail."

BARRET.

"WELL, Sir Edward, of course you can do as you please," said the sharp voice of Miss Lydia Hamilton to her brother-in-law ; "but really, when I think of my poor sister Agnes, and of what would have been her feelings if she could know of your taking Clara abroad, I cannot help being quite grieved. So preposterous ! a girl of fourteen, whose education is but half finished, and with no one to take care of her but yourself. It is too bad."

"And who so proper, Miss Hamilton, as a father to have the charge of his only child ?" replied Sir Edward, quietly. "Had my dear Agnes been alive, there would have been no occasion for Clara, or indeed for me either, to leave England ; but, as you well know, my health will not bear another winter here, and I cannot now consent to leave behind me my only earthly tie. My dear child's

education, about which you seem so anxious, will be attended to, I can assure you, in Paris, where I shall remain some time ; and in many other places she will have every advantage. But, indeed, I need not enter into particulars with you of my future plans. I would only beg you not to make yourself uneasy on this subject," continued Sir Edward, coldly ; "no further remonstrance is therefore necessary."

"Just as you choose ; it is not of the slightest consequence to me. What I have said was only for my poor sister's sake—I had thought you had more regard for her memory."

"Miss Hamilton, I will thank you to change the subject," said Sir Edward, much annoyed, who rose and walked to the window. Miss Hamilton, seeing there was no further chance of remonstrating, left the room angrily, to muse over the plan which, if carried out, would take her niece from under her care and governance.

But we must introduce Clara Howard more particularly to our readers, ere we can explain to them the subject of the foregoing conversation. Clara could hardly be said to have known a parent's love in infancy ; for, deprived of her mother by death, at the age of three years, the shock of that event had so affected Sir Edward, that, overwhelmed with grief, shattered in health, and utterly broken-hearted, and, for the time, forgetful that there was yet one being who had now a double claim on a father's solicitude, he left England for change of air and scene, intrusting Clara to the care of Miss Hamilton, his wife's sister, of whose character he, however, knew but little, she having seldom visited at Beech-hall. Miss

Hamilton was by no means suited to so important a charge, being a cold, harsh woman, not likely to win the affections of her little niece. This soon evinced itself, after the departure of Sir Edward, by the rigorous system of discipline which she enforced on the gentle Clara, considering it her duty to subdue all childish glee, allowing her little recreation, and persevering in a course of study truly severe for a child of her tender age. Perhaps it was this system of early training that gave Clara an unusually thoughtful turn of mind, which shewed itself both in her countenance and manner, and induced a reserve of character which was by no means natural to her. Had she been an ordinary child, possessing ordinary talents, such an education as Aunt Lydia insisted upon, would most probably have done much harm; but it fortunately happened otherwise. Clara's great delight was study. She cared not how soon she was summoned from her amusements to her lessons: study was better than playing in the garden, with Aunt Lydia's sharp eyes upon her all the time—it being one of Miss Hamilton's plans, never to put any confidence in children, or to trust them out of sight a moment. Time, however, passed on, and years flew by; and often the lonely little girl at Beech-hall wondered "when papa would return, as she sadly wanted some one to love."

"And why not love your aunt, Miss?" the nurse once asked her.

"Because," replied the child, raising her blue eyes sorrowfully to the nurse's face, "because she will not let me. Oh, how I wish papa would come! I am sure I should love him."

And did Sir Edward, all these years, never feel a desire to see his child? Yes. Often he longed for a look at her; and yet—strange infatuation!—the idea of returning to her was almost agony to him. The remembrance of his lovely young wife dying in the morning of her life had never passed away, and had left such an aching void, that anything which reminded him of her opened the wound afresh; and he could not rouse himself to make the effort again to visit the scenes of her early death, and to see the child whose budding beauty bore so marked a resemblance to that which had for ever faded from his view. But at length his heart so yearned to see her, that he suddenly made up his mind to return, and arrived unexpectedly in England, when Clara had completed her twelfth year. Then there was, indeed, joy for all, save Aunt Lydia, whose plans were all upset by her brother-in-law's return. He did not approve of her system of education, and he immediately made Clara commence an entirely new plan, much to her aunt's indignation. Now Clara's life grew as bright as possible, and she soon learned to cling to and love her father far beyond her utmost expectations. Sir Edward had, from ill-health, become indolent and careless about most things; yet in all that interested his child, was still warm and energetic. He soon saw his folly in having trusted such a treasure to one who was utterly unable to perform the part of a mother to her—so different was the harsh, cold Miss Hamilton, to the gentle and amiable Lady Howard. Sir Edward at once determined he would never again have to blame himself for having failed in his duty to his child; and he would not leave Beech-hall without her who was

now as dear as his life to him. Alas! how soon was he compelled to put this resolution into practice! His health, which had been better, again gave way the second year after his return, and once more his physicians recommended his leaving England. Grieved as he now was to be obliged to quit his home, he was quite determined Clara should go with him. True, she had only just entered upon her fourteenth year, and her education was but half completed; yet why should she not go with him?—there would be every advantage for her on the continent, and he would himself superintend her studies. Miss Hamilton was, of course, most indignant at the idea of Clara being taken from her care; for she knew Beech-hall would be closed, and she herself obliged to return to her former home; besides which, there were many privileges she would have to give up that she had long enjoyed *there*.

In vain she remonstrated. Sir Edward was firm; and in high indignation she quitted Beech-hall, not even staying to direct the preparations for her niece's departure.

And Clara! oh, how gladly, how willingly, did she leave her home, dear and beautiful as it was; but her father was to be with her, and that was all in all to her. She knew not then how long it would be ere she returned to that loved place; now she only lived in the present, and rejoiced in the realisation of her childish dreams—of loving and being loved by her father. But we need not follow them in their journeyings; we may pass on to some years later. Suffice it to say, Sir Edward kept his word, and Clara's education was carefully finished; and she became not only an accomplished, but a sensible and clever woman.

For five long years they travelled abroad, Sir Edward's restless disposition seldom allowing them to remain long in one place. Thus Clara had acquired an unusual amount of information for one so young. Yet, while storing her mind with mere worldly knowledge, heavenly things, alas! were never thought of. She knew of no better knowledge than that which nature and the writings of clever men afforded her. She never heard that command—"Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and there was no one who told her of that gracious Saviour who spoke those words, and who has promised a special blessing to those who seek him early.

" 'The spring-time of the year is coming,' Clara dear, and I have a plan to propose which I hope may meet with your approval," said Sir Edward, gaily, one morning to his daughter, as they sat together in an apartment of — Hotel, at Lucerne, where they had spent the winter.

" Indeed, dear papa, what can it be? "

" Nothing more nor less than to return to happy England; I long to see it once more. "

How Clara's eyes beamed with delight as she replied—" To England! Can you really mean it, papa? Are you sure your health will not suffer from the change? "

" I think not, dear; and Monsieur Lombard thinks not also. You know he has been here lately. I have not mentioned this plan before, as I had not quite fully determined, and did not like to raise expectations in you which I might have to disappoint. Now, Clara, for your decision? "

" Oh, papa, you know what I shall say! Indeed, indeed, nothing can be so delightful to me. How soon shall we go? "

"As soon as you can be ready. We shall be some time on the road, as travelling is not so rapid now as in summer. But I am anxious to reach London before the height of the season, as I think it full time my Clara should be introduced to the world ; indeed, my child, I have kept you too long from such a pleasure."

"Oh, don't say so, papa ! How could I have pleasure in anything in which you were not able to participate ?—and indeed," she added, as a thoughtful expression passed over her face—"indeed, I don't think the world could make me any happier, or so happy, I may say, as I now am. I hope, papa, that my introduction to society is not your reason for returning ? I should be so sorry if I thought it was."

"No, certainly—not entirely, Clara ; but I feel I have been a wanderer too long, and I now desire to have some rest and quiet in my own home. We shall pass the winter, or rather spring, in London ; and then, when summer comes, if all is well, I hope we shall see Beech-hall again."

"Oh, how charming to see dear, dear home again ! How I wonder what changes have taken place in Wilmington since I left ! I was quite a child then, you know, papa. How differently I shall look upon things now ! There are some things I remember, and like so well, too, about Beech-hall, I hope you will not have them altered, papa—(you used to say you would once)—the little gate that leads into the wood, the pretty walk through it to the parsonage, with that little rippling brook which I wanted so much to walk through, and Aunt Lydia would not allow me ; and she kept the gate locked afterwards,

and I could only peep through the bars, and childlike long to do as I pleased, and walk in the wood. Then I remember wondering why it always made the same noise ; and when I asked aunt, she told me I was a silly child, and had no taste to be always watching the brook, when the fountain in the garden was so much prettier ; but I never could see it — the water spouting out of the dolphin's mouth seemed frightful, and I thought the little brook seemed to flow so much more naturally and prettily along."

" So your love of nature began very early, Clara ; well, you have had many opportunities of studying it since, in all these five long years we have been away. Many times, I daresay, you have grown weary of it, you have been so much left alone with only these lakes and snow mountains for companions."

" Oh, no ! never lonely, papa, always glad to be with you, but never tired of studying nature ; only sometimes —— " She paused.

" Only sometimes what, Clara ?"

" I hardly know how to express myself, papa ; but it seems as if there was a something wanting in me to make me fully understand all these wonders ; like the rippling of the brook, I seem to lose myself in contemplation sometimes, and I feel as if there was something else I ought to learn from nature that I cannot fathom."

" No more can any one, my dear ; there is no one can understand everything."

" No, it was not that, papa ; you have not quite caught my meaning. Indeed, I can hardly say myself what it is that I want to discover ; it is not now as when a child—

the causes of certain effects. But—but—I think I do not know sufficient of the Creator of all these beauties.”

“ Ah ! well, my dear, I daresay I am as ignorant as you of these things—perhaps I ought to know more ; but do not make yourself uneasy, for you are too young yet to become religious.”

“ But not too young to die, papa,” said Clara, solemnly.

“ My dearest child, do not be moody. Why make yourself miserable ; what harm have you done that *you* should fear death ? ”

“ But, dear father, what *good* have I ever done ? ” she said, kneeling down by Sir Edward’s side, and raising her mild blue eyes to his face.

“ Much, very much, my love : you have solaced many a dreary hour of sickness and pain, and been the joy and pride of my heart ; you have made me, who never thought to see happiness again, the happiest of men.”

A tear trembled in Clara’s eye as she fondly kissed her father, but yet she felt checked in what she might have confided to him—her deep sense of her own shortcomings, an undefined longing for something more stable to rest upon than what earth could afford ; and yet she knew of no way to discover what she so much wished to obtain. The Bible, alas ! had never been read ; she had never been directed to “ search the Scriptures ; ” all religious subjects were carefully avoided by her father, as tending only to unsettle her mind, and make her unhappy. Few opportunities were afforded her of attending public worship—as even in those towns abroad where Protestant service is conducted, many of the churches

are closed during the winter months; and even when opened, Sir Edward had ever discouraged his daughter from attending them. No wonder, then, that a beam of joy should shine into Clara's heart at the prospect of again returning to her own country. There she trusted her longings might be satisfied, and that some friend might be found who would lead her right. Light and buoyant was her step, as she took her morning's walk by the shores of that most beautiful of all lakes—Lucerne.

“Yes,” she exclaimed to herself, as she surveyed the snow-clad mountains around her, with the majestic Mount Pilatus towering above all—“yes, this land may have grandeur—more sublime beauty—but it can never be so dear to me as my own dear English home.”

Very trying had these five years been to Clara, though a murmur, even to herself, had never escaped her lips:—her father's ill-health; her own lonely situation among strangers, with none but her maid (who had nursed her in infancy) to whom to apply in any difficulty, where a female friend would have been so pleasant; and often the fear of losing her only parent, preyed heavily upon her mind. Those only who have experienced the feeling of having no settled home, no friends to whom to confide the inmost feelings of the heart, will know how to sympathise with Clara. The incessant watchings and anxieties attending upon her father's constant relapses; the hours of reading English newspapers; the long conversations Sir Edward would hold with her, in the subjects of which, with all her endeavours, she often found it impossible to feel an interest,—were all borne with untiring patience and self-denial. To mould her own will to that

of the parent she so dearly loved, was her great aim ; and well she succeeded, for surely never did greater affection subsist between father and daughter than between Sir Edward and Clara.

" Lewis, are you not glad we are going home again ?" exclaimed Clara that evening to her maid, who, as we before said, had been with her young mistress from infancy ; and having attended Lady Howard on her death-bed, was very highly esteemed by Sir Edward, and almost regarded as a friend by Clara.

" Indeed, Miss Howard, I am very glad—more for your sake than my own, because I know it will make you so happy."

" Yes ! I am, indeed, very much delighted ; but you cannot think how pleased papa is about it, too—he seems in such good spirits."

" Do you think, then, that my master is better, ma'am ?"

" Oh ! very decidedly so ; and he wishes us to lose no time in making preparation for leaving here ; and you know papa, when he has once made up his mind about a thing, likes no time to be lost—so you must make all the haste you can, Lewis."

" Certainly, ma'am ; I am sure I will lose no time."

The few days that intervened before their departure were spent in a delightful state of bustle and preparation by Clara, whose whole heart overflowed with pleasing anticipations and conjectures, though perhaps a little damped when she thought of the formidable ordeal she must pass through in being introduced to the world,—a subject in which she saw her father took no small interest.

They were to spend the first few weeks with Mr Hamilton, Sir Edward's brother-in-law, who resided in London generally, and then to look out for some residence for themselves. Their journey was necessarily rather a long one, the usual route for travellers not being very easily passed in winter. But at length they arrived safely at Calais, from whence Clara could discern the white cliffs of England, which to her seemed quite as tempting as we are told they did to Julius Cæsar ere he embarked on his first enterprise against Britain. It was a lovely day, mild as spring, and the sea clear and calm, as Clara and her father stood upon the deck of the English steamer, watching it intently as it glided swiftly through the waters.

"So dear Clara is glad to return again," said Sir Edward, fondly placing his hand on his daughter's shoulder.

"Indeed, indeed I am! Oh, I am so happy!"

"So am I, darling; and I hope we shall not leave England any more. If God pleases to spare my life, I will spend the remainder of it among my own people. We have wandered long enough."

"Dear papa, may God indeed spare your life to me!" replied Clara, her voice trembling as she spoke.

"Well, we cannot tell, my child; these things are hid from us, and no doubt wisely."

At this moment, the steward came to speak to Sir Edward, and this subject was not resumed. And soon came the hurry of landing—custom-house officers running about among the passengers to examine the smaller articles of luggage—people pushing forward—cabmen

shouting, and porters hurrying about. Clara and her father, glad to get away from this scene of confusion, leaving their servants with the luggage, hastened to the hotel, and were soon enjoying a good English dinner, with a cheerful, blazing fire, and all that looked homelike around them.

Next morning, Clara could scarcely believe it was not a dream, to hear her own language spoken—the well-known street-cries under her window—and the honest, hearty feeling expressed in the faces of her own country-people. They remained at Dover a few days, to give Sir Edward time to recover from the fatigues of his journey, ere they started for London. Clara felt nervous at the prospect of encountering her relations. She had so seldom seen any of them, that she could hardly remember what they were like; she had some undefined kind of dread that they must, all more or less resemble Aunt Lydia, and this thought cast a cloud over her otherwise pleasurable anticipations.

CHAPTER II.

"The world employs its various snares
Of hopes and pleasures, pains and cares,
And chain'd to earth I lie :
When shall my fetter'd powers be free,
And leave these seats of vanity,
And upward learn to fly ?"

STEELE.

"I WONDER what sort of girl Clara will be !" exclaimed the lively Kate Hamilton, for the twentieth time, either to herself or aloud, the day the Howards were expected in — Street.

"Something quite original, no doubt, with the absurd education Sir Edward has chosen to give her, and living all this time away from society," said Mr Hamilton, sarcastically.

"Clara was always a singular but a very clever child, William," said Mrs Hamilton, gently. "I know even your sister Lydia thought so ; and I daresay the peculiar training she has had will have done her less harm than most young people."

"That remains to be proved, Harriet. I am no advocate for making people either singular or clever ; and I wish Sir Edward may not see the folly of his conduct too late. *My* belief is, Clara will be no more fit than a child to introduce into society."

"Oh, I hope not; but, however, we shall soon judge for ourselves," said Mrs Hamilton.

"I need not, I hope, Kate, however, have again to remind you, that you are to be very attentive to your cousin. A time *may* come when you will be glad to have made her your friend. Sir Edward is a man of great wealth and interest, and may do us much service. At the same time, do not talk the nonsense you often do now about your passion for balls, and dress, &c., which quite disgusts me." Mr Hamilton spoke almost sternly, and Kate crimsoned at his observations, as she replied, shortly—

"I will do my best, papa."

"And you, too, Claude," glancing at his son, a handsome young man who was indolently reclining on a couch—"you will, I hope, endeavour to make yourself agreeable to your cousin."

The young man raised his eyes contemptuously to his father's face, while he merely said—"I do not suppose I shall see enough of my cousin to commend myself in anywise to her notice."

"Come, come, Claude, do not talk in that way; why not strive to win cousin Clara at once, while you have her all to yourself? Remember she will be a great heiress," said Kate, merrily shaking back her curls.

"So she may be, for aught I care; if her face be not equal to her fortune, which is seldom the case, she will have no addresses of mine; I do not care for wealth—beauty is all to me."

"Claude," said Mr Hamilton, sternly, "who will pay your debts, I should like to know, if you do not assist

yourself? Though some of your uncle's estates are entailed, your cousin will undoubtedly have a very large fortune. As for beauty, it is of no consequence whatever. Let me never hear you speak so inconsiderately again." And Mr Hamilton left the room.

"I wish, Claude, you would not make use of such observations; you know, my dear, they annoy your father, and of course, in doing so, you grieve me," said poor Mrs Hamilton, anxiously.

"On my honour, my dear mother, I would not hurt your feelings for the world; but I must own it rouses my indignation to hear my father speak of my cousin as a mere speculation. From my heart I pity her, beset as she will be, in this her first season, with fortune-hunters on all sides. Who would wish to be an heiress!"

"I am sure I often wish I was one; it would be so nice to have as much money as one could hardly know what to do with," said Kate, flushing slightly.

"Then take my word, Kate, don't wish that again; I really do think wealth has never given happiness, though, like you, there are some occasions in which I have wanted money." And Claude sighed heavily.

"My dear boy," said his mother, sorrowfully, "I know there are; but you have been very extravagant, and have justly made your father angry, therefore you are now reaping the consequences of your own follies."

"Well, perhaps, I may be—but seriously, mother, I intend to reform; but my father will not bend me to his will as he thinks. I am not going to be goaded, and——"

Just then, the sound of a carriage stopping below was

heard, and Kate exclaimed, "They are here—they are here!"

"I shall meet you at dinner, then, mamma; till then, adieu!" said Claude, hastily escaping ere Sir Edward and his daughter ascended the stairs. Nothing could be kinder than the reception given by all the Hamiltons to the travellers, who, however, fatigued with their journey, soon retired to their own apartments to take a little rest before dinner. And what did the fastidious Claude think of his cousin, when she joined their party after enjoying an hour's repose? Did she realise his ideas of perfect beauty? for Claude was considered a great connoisseur in female loveliness. He now for the first time beheld a face he had often pictured, but never seen; Clara's at once was stamped as the highest, purest style of beauty; not perhaps in perfect regularity of feature, but here is her description:—A figure tall and slender, of perfect symmetry; hair as black as jet, waving gently over a very fine placid brow; and from under a pair of long silken lashes, the beholder was surprised to see eyes of deep, soft, liquid blue, which, without having any keenness in them, seemed calmly to read character as if it were written on the face; her nose was partly aquiline, with a mouth and chin whose sweetness of expression was unrivalled; and a complexion beautiful, though not dazzling. Perhaps her features were the least charm of her lovely face; the countenance was calm, yet touched with just a shade of pensiveness, which gave it only an additional interest. No one could see her, and not be struck with such a rare combination of all that was lovely. So

Claude felt as he almost forgot himself in amazement, to think that this should be the little girl he had once seen years before, and whom then he only thought rather pretty, but far too shy to please his fancy. He failed not to tell Kate that evening, in a laughing manner, that he was perfectly satisfied, and should lose no time in following her advice. By Claude, however, more than any of the Hamiltons, was Clara likely to be appreciated; her quiet composed manners, a perfect self-possession, which appeared even the first evening they spent together, made him long to win her love; he saw she possessed the very qualities in which he was deficient. Though to his own family Claude generally seemed wild and extravagant, yet there was much that was good and noble about him, and which wanted only some one, like Clara, with the capacity to bring it out. The next few days were chiefly spent in receiving visits or returning them, with Mrs and Miss Hamilton, Sir Edward declining at first to see any visitors until he was quite recovered from his recent fatigue; every spare moment Clara devoted to him, refusing all invitations until he was able to accompany her. At length, Sir Edward seemed well enough, and declared his intention of joining the family.

"Oh, I am so glad, uncle! Then Clara will perhaps accept some of the many invitations she has had, and go to Lady Stanley's ball on Thursday—she is so anxious Clara should be there," said Kate, eagerly.

Sir Edward smiled good-humouredly; and turning to Clara, asked what she thought about making her first appearance? He could not see her face, for she was purposely concealing it from him; so he knew not the

expression of sadness and perplexity that rested upon it. "Well, what do you say, dear?"

She seemed to struggle with some feeling for a moment, and then replied, raising her blue eyes wistfully to his face—"I can hardly tell what to think, dear papa; just what you propose, I shall like best."

"You do not know, Clara, how charming a ball is; only try it once," said Kate.

"I suppose I must, Kate," said her cousin, smiling.

"Oh! I know you will always be wanting to go again, when you get into the spirit of it."

"I hope not, or else what will become of *me*?" said Sir Edward.

Kate laughed a merry little laugh, not at all considering her uncle serious. Just then, the dressing-bell rang, and Kate hurried away.

"What a frivolous little thing Kate is!" said Sir Edward.

"No; I don't think she is that, papa—only very light-hearted and full of fun, formed to enjoy the pleasures of life fully."

"And you feel as if you were not formed for that, eh, my dear?"

"I do not know, papa, because, as Kate says, I have yet to try them; but I fancy dancing will not be any great enjoyment to me." And again a troubled expression crossed over her fair face. She knelt down by her father's side, and he fondly passed his arm round her neck.

"I thought you seemed grave about the ball, my dear; and sorry as I should be to force your inclinations, yet, my darling, the time has now arrived when it is highly

desirable you should make your appearance in the world, and I feel I should not be justified in withholding so great an ornament from it ; though Heaven knows, Clara, how much I shall miss the nice evenings we have hitherto spent together."

"Oh ! let me stay with you, papa, and I shall wish no greater happiness."

"No, no, my darling ! it must not be ; you *must* oblige me in this."

"Yes, papa, if you desire it, I will."

"And I doubt not you will like it, too. Gaiety has many attractions to the young, though its charms have ceased for me long ago."

"And I doubt not they will soon leave me, too," said Clara, smiling.

"Now, my dear, you must not go and make yourself nervous about this ball—you have nothing to fear."

"No ; I am not much afraid of that, papa : being a stranger to so many, I shall pass unnoticed, I daresay ; and now I must run away from you, and dress, or we shall both be late ;" and kissing him affectionately, she left the room. Poor Clara ! her father—no one understood her feelings, and she saw they did not ; and this made her reserve greater than ever. Something had suggested itself to her—a doubt as to whether the world could give her that peace for which she so much sighed. But she checked the feeling, remembering she had not yet tried it ; but it *would* come again, and she thought she was sure peace was not to be found in the world. Then, again, it was resisted, as she knew her father wished her to enter society—and that was enough. So the ball was

agreed upon, and Clara tried to rejoice at it. Next morning, when Clara entered her father's room, he put into her hand a number of bank-notes, telling her she must purchase what she chose for herself, in the way of dress. In vain she protested she wanted nothing; Sir Edward only laughed. She next tried to discover his wishes about her dress; but it was equally vain. He told her he left all such things to ladies, and she must act for herself in these matters.

"Well, then, I must be content with Kate's assistance, I suppose," said Clara, smiling; and the carriage was ordered to take them out for a drive. When they returned, a splendid collection of dresses, &c., awaited their inspection, which delighted Kate not a little; and she was most enthusiastic in her expressions of rapture, quite forgetting her brother's caution not to envy her cousin. She was inclined often to wish she were but in Clara's position; how much more she should prize her advantages!—for the listlessness with which her cousin looked at the things was beyond her comprehension. Miss Howard was no great length of time before she had finished; and having dismissed the shopman, she gave a sigh of relief, as she exclaimed—

"How wearisome all this is, Kate! I am so glad it is over. Now, shall we go to our own room, and have a nice quiet chat until the dressing-bell rings?"

"With pleasure, dear Clara. Now tell me, Clara," continued Kate, when they were quietly seated in the dressing-room, "how is it you don't seem to care for all these pretty things?"

"Me? oh, I hardly know; but it always tires me, somehow."

"Well, you are very different to me. And do tell me, coz, what you intend to wear at Lady Stanley's?"

"No, no! I must keep the secret," said Clara, laughing. "Oh, dear! I had no idea it was so late!" looking at her watch.

"Well, I will come back when I am dressed, if I may," said Kate, hastening away.

When she reached her own room, what was her astonishment to find the very dresses she had herself admired most, laid there! Hastily completing her toilet, she returned to her cousin's room to inquire the reason of the mistake, and then found they were intended for her as a present.

"Oh, how generous you are, Clara!—you have made me so happy!" and Kate quite danced for joy.

"How singular," thought Clara, "that my cousin should have such pleasure in these things!"

Just then, Lewis, having finished dressing Miss Howard's hair, opened her jewel-box, at the same time displaying to the wondering Kate a profusion of brilliants.

"Oh, Clara, do let me look!—how splendid they are! You must be very happy!" she exclaimed, with childish glee.

"Happy!" repeated Clara, slowly; "my dear Kate, you don't think the possession of such things as these would make me happy?"

"Why, no—perhaps not altogether; but still amongst other things they will contribute—they would to me, I am sure."

Poor Kate! the world and its vanities had engrossed her very heart. She knew nothing, she thought of

nothing beyond the present scene, though there be a treasure more precious than rubies—a pearl of greater price than those which ocean yields—a crown of more dazzling brightness than any earthly diadem. Nor was Clara possessed of clearer knowledge ; but she instinctively felt the possession of jewels was no delight to her, and she could but half understand her cousin's pleasure.

" They are very beautiful, no doubt ; and I value them most highly. Papa has been very kind in giving me a great many ; and the others—how dear they must ever be to me, for they were my mother's. Ah, Kate !" she added, the tears springing into her eyes, " you have a treasure I never knew how to prize—you have a mother. Oh, if I had but a mother, what would I not give ! "

" Yes, indeed, I have ; and a very dear, kind one she is. I do not think I could live without her."

" And I never knew mine. You are a happy girl, Kate. Love her, value her while you may."

" Yes, indeed I will."

" Bring my dress, Lewis ; I am ready," said Clara.

" What an immense sum this diamond bracelet must have cost !" said Kate, holding up a string of brilliants, sparkling with many colours.

" Yes ; I am ashamed to say how much papa spent upon that for me ; but, Kate, I often wonder of what use these things really are—can they do us any good ? " There was a touching melancholy in her voice as she spoke.

" Yes—no—I cannot tell exactly. I think, though, there is, I fancy I should like to be constantly having more."

"But to me life seems so very short, and we must leave all so soon; do you not think——"

"My dear coz, do not be so melancholy," interrupted Kate. "It is quite a relief to hear the dinner-bell, you make me feel so sad."

"I did not mean to do that, Kate," Clara said, kindly kissing her cousin; and hastily closing her dressing-case, they descended to dinner. It was very plain from this conversation, that though the cousins might like each other very much, yet there was no real sympathy between them. Clara had fondly hoped there might have been; but, long ere this, she had seen most of her cousin's real character; for Clara possessed much true discernment, and was quick at discovering the thoughts and feelings of others. Kate Hamilton, though thoughtless and frivolous in the extreme—enjoying the world, with all its pleasures, with the keenest relish, having no thought beyond—was yet unselfish and good-natured, perfectly open and ingenuous, and already looked up to her cousin with the most unbounded admiration. Had Clara, however, possessed the privileges Kate had done, she would not have been seeking then for peace. For years, as we before said, she had seldom been in a Protestant place of worship; and though sometimes at mass, the senseless mummary of the whole proceeding was distasteful to her. As to Sir Edward, he considered his health quite sufficient excuse for absenting himself from all religious services, and almost always, while abroad, detained Clara likewise, either to read the newspapers to him, or else they walked out into the public gardens, to listen to the bands playing, or to amuse themselves in watching the different persons

they saw. How lamentable it is to see so many of our own countrymen wishing to degrade our English Sabbath to the level of the continental one!—this precious Sabbath, which is old as creation itself, and which is the great safeguard of our nation, and which has made England the most highly-favoured of all lands.

But there was no one to tell Clara it was wrong thus to spend God's holy day—no one to suggest that, by an attendance at the house of God, she would secure opportunities of learning the true source and end of her being, and the close, intimate connexion that existed between her own happiness and a conformity to the will of her Creator.

When Miss Howard and her cousin entered the drawing-room, they found a young nobleman there, who, according to Kate's account, was a friend of Claude's, and who was frequently a guest at their house. He appeared about five or six and twenty, of highly prepossessing appearance, though perhaps not positively handsome. Clara noticed Kate's deep blush, and somewhat hurried manner, as she introduced Lord Cleveland to Miss Howard; and her colour grew still deeper when she saw the extreme eagerness with which he greeted her, and instantly took the vacant seat by Clara's side, entering into conversation with the air of a man determined to make himself agreeable. Dinner, however, being almost immediately announced, he had not much opportunity of speaking; and Clara presently found herself seated between her uncle and Claude, while Lord Cleveland was opposite. Had she been inclined to notice him, she might have observed how frequently his eyes were directed towards

her, with the deepest interest ; but happily unconscious of her own personal attractions, and equally indifferent to admiration, she only amused herself with listening to Claude's humorous conversation, to which it was a great relief to turn, after the incessant formal attentions she received from Mr Hamilton, for whom she felt quite a dread. She could not understand his cold, stern manner to his own children, while he evidently made every exertion to be agreeable to her. She felt it was impossible to be grateful to him, as she had vainly tried ; for a man who knows not how to shew kindness to those who ought to be dearest to him, cannot expect to gain the esteem of others.

Mrs Hamilton was a kind, gentle being, to whom Clara felt much attracted ; but she was too weak and timid to act the part of a guide to her niece, who would have given the world could she only have been invited to confide in her aunt as a mother. But Mrs Hamilton stood in great awe of her husband, whose sternness had quite subdued her spirits ; so that it was now almost impossible to rouse her to any exertion, unless connected with her children, to whom she was most devoted. She was extremely anxious to forward her husband's plan of bringing about a union between Clara and her son, and used all her remaining energy to make the visit pleasant to Sir Edward and his daughter.

Clara liked her cousin Claude very much ; but regarding him as a spoilt boy, whose conversation amused her, the idea of his being her lover never entered her head. Consequently, the extreme attention of both her uncle and aunt made her feel uncomfortable, lest she should be giving them too much trouble.

When the gentlemen joined them after dinner, Lord Cleveland at once sought Clara's side. There was a frankness and gaiety in his conversation which pleased her much—he was so easy to talk to, there was no need for fear of wanting subjects to converse upon—he was ever ready. Music was at length proposed ; and Kate, who sang and played remarkably well, immediately, at Clara's request, seated herself at the piano.

"Of course you play, Miss Howard," said Lord Cleveland.

"To no one but myself."

"How cruel ! but you are only joking—all ladies perform now, I think."

"Do they ? Well, as there are exceptions to every rule, I am one, for it is quite six months since I have touched an instrument. My cousin plays and sings so very well, I have no wish to do so as long as I am able to hear her. I think it is much pleasanter to listen than to play myself."

"You do not then consider your friends' tastes ?"

"Certainly I should, were it desirable ; but as none of them have heard me, they are ignorant of their loss," Clara said, smiling.

"Then, if you do not play or sing, you draw ?"

"I think I may say I do very little of that either ; certainly I sketch occasionally, but I infinitely prefer music."

"Then why do you not cultivate it ?"

"Because I have had no opportunity. Last winter we were at Lucerne, and could not meet with a good instrument ; so I gave up my music. By and by, I hope to resume it."

"You make me extremely curious. You say you neither sing, play, nor draw ; what are you in the habit of killing time with ? Embroidery, perhaps ?"

"You will begin, my lord, to think me incapable of doing anything, if I tell you embroidery is not much in my way."

"Really you surprise me. I thought these were the only things ladies ever did."

Clara laughed merrily. "Your opinion is, then, a very erroneous one. I hope you are not meaning to accuse me of leading a butterfly-life. So far from wanting to kill time, I have often found it too short for all I wished to do."

"Oh, pray, then, give me your recipe, for I often find it hang very heavy on *my* hands ; though not always—to-night, for instance, I wish the hours were twice as long."

"Well, if you wish to know what I do, then I will tell you. I read a great deal, and walk, and talk, and now and then, perhaps, I *do* undertake a little embroidery."

"Now, Miss Howard, you are laughing at me. I do the three first-mentioned things ; but really one cannot be always doing them. I grow so tired of reading, I often fall asleep over it."

"And what style of reading do you generally adopt ?"

"Oh, why, of course I always have the new novels, &c., as they come out."

"Oh, now then, I find out the reason of your ennui. If you never read anything but novels, you may well be heavy."

"Well, but other reading must be fatiguing as well."

Clara did not sympathise—she only felt she knew no weariness; for, like an industrious bee, she was continually storing her mind with fresh information, and without any feeling but that of pleasure at all she learnt. Just then, Mr Hamilton advanced to try to persuade Miss Howard to sing; but she assured him it would be a great treat if Kate would give them the pretty little Italian song she had sung last night. Kate hesitated, but finally again seated herself at the piano. Clara remained standing by her, and Lord Cleveland *now* listened with the profoundest attention.

“Oh, sweetly pretty! Where did you hear it? Who is the composer?” he said, when Kate had finished.

“I sang it last time you were here,” said Kate, a little abruptly, and colouring slightly.

“Did you? ’Pon my honour, I beg your pardon, Miss Hamilton, for having forgotten it. I wonder I did not remember it.”

“I wonder so, too, for it really is so beautiful,” said Clara. “Thanks, Kate. Now, please, my other favourite.”

“No, please, not to-night,” said Kate, earnestly; and Clara, seeing her cousin preferred to retire to her seat, politely forbore to press her.

“Now, Miss Howard, if you will not think me too presuming, might I ask you to recommend me some books, for I see you cannot understand my ever being tired of reading; and, perhaps, if you were to suggest some to me, they might improve my taste.”

“I confess, my lord, I can fully understand your growing tired, if you only read those works of fiction, of

which there are such a number in the present day. Were you to vary your style, you would find it more profitable."

"Do you, then, never read novels?"

"Sometimes I do, but I find they are too dangerous to indulge in frequently; I fear so much getting into the habit of reading under excitement, that I only allow myself one now and then."

"Ah, then, you see my taste is vitiated."

"I conclude it must be so, if you have lost all relish for more solid books."

"Lord Cleveland's carriage," said the servant, entering the room.

"How provoking!" muttered Lord Cleveland to himself; then aloud, rising—"I am exceedingly sorry to be obliged to leave you; but my mother and sister are going to the Duke of L——'s ball, and I must be ready to attend them."

"What a strange girl she is!—I cannot make her out. No accomplishments, and yet so fascinating; the more I conversed with her, the more charmed I became," said he, when the carriage door was closed.

The secret, however, was this—the quiet simplicity of her manner, her perfect freedom from affectation, joined with her graceful movements and beautiful face, could not fail to excite general admiration.

Lord Cleveland was the only son of the Earl and Countess of Harrington, and from earliest childhood had been accustomed to consider himself of no small importance. No wonder, then, he was somewhat spoilt by flattery, and prided himself upon making quite a sensa-

tion among the circles he chose to honour with his presence. He was, however, amiable and amusing, in spite of other disadvantages. Unfortunately being, in the most dangerous acceptation of the word, a "flirt," many a poor heedless girl had been drawn on to believe herself the object of his unbounded affection, until a new beauty appeared, whose charms allured him away; not that Lord Cleveland would have intentionally caused pain—he concluded most women as fickle as himself, and that they could as easily forget; this in several instances had not been the case. Poor Kate Hamilton was the last to whom he had paid most flattering attentions; her heart was not proof against her danger, and she had learnt to love him but too well. And now, what was her agony to find herself suddenly forsaken; for during the whole evening he had hardly addressed her, and his most insinuating smiles, his choicest compliments, and most agreeable conversation, had been lavished upon Clara. Poor Kate's heart ached with sickening anxiety as she watched it all.

"He will love Clara, I know he will—he must do," she thought; "but will she return his affection as I do? Oh! she never can do that; but my cousin is an heiress, and I shall have nothing. She is beautiful and clever. Oh! how I wish I was too!"

Unable to resist, she burst into an agony of tears the moment she retired to her own room, and wept long and passionately; at length she was roused by feeling a soft cheek pressed to hers—a kind hand supporting her drooping head. It was Clara. Kate started. "I hope I have not disturbed you, dear? I knocked, but receiving no

answer I ventured to come in ; and seeing your distress, I thought I might comfort you."

" Oh, I am quite well now, Clara ; sometimes I do feel a little unhappy—we all do, you know."

Clara looked grave. " Can I not comfort you then, Kate ? But I would not press you to give me any confidence, unless you would like it."

" Thanks, Clara, for your kindness, but I am better now, indeed—do not be angry with me, because I cannot tell you all."

" Oh, no, certainly not ; but come and sit with me by the dressing-room fire a while, will you ?"

" Yes ! in a minute I will be with you."

Clara left the room, while Kate, hastily drying her tears, prepared to follow. Clara was at a loss to account for the sudden change of spirits which Kate had when she joined her. She seemed quite excited and wild, in her endeavour to conceal from her cousin the real cause of her sorrow.

" Take care, Kate, or you will really set your dress on fire," said Clara, in an agony, as her cousin stood thoughtlessly near the flame of a candle.

" Oh ! I *am* on fire, Clara ! What shall I do ?" she exclaimed, as Miss Howard beheld the thin gauze in a blaze. " Help me !" screamed Kate, losing all self-possession, and rushing wildly about the room.

" Keep quiet—oh, pray do ! or I cannot put it out," said Clara, throwing, as well as she was able, a thick counterpane over her cousin, and, with her maid's assistance, freely dashing her with cold water, which soon extinguished the fire.

"Oh, thousands of thanks! But how wet you have made me and my new dress!—the first time I have had it on, dear, it is quite spoilt!"

"Never mind it now, Kate—you shall have another," said Clara, in a low voice, quite shocked by her cousin's thinking of her dress, in comparison of the danger she had escaped. "Come, now," she added, kindly, "let us take off these wet clothes, or you will get a sad cold."

Kate submitted quietly, now subdued by her own foolishness, and Clara kindly assisted her to bed.

"Poor Kate!" thought Clara, when she returned to her own room—"she has sorrow, too; I believe we all must have some secret burden to bear;" and then she remembered to have heard or read somewhere, that "man is born to trouble." Ah! yes, she knew where—it was in the old church at Wilmington years ago, for she recollected asking her aunt when she returned, "Why people had troubles?" "Because every one has, child." "And must I have them, too, aunt?" "Of course, Clara." "Have *you* any, aunt?" she ventured to ask. "Yes, to be sure, and a great many, too; but why do you make such foolish observations? I am being much tried *now* by a little girl who ought to be in the schoolroom learning her catechism." This had effectually checked her childish curiosity; but as she slowly left the room, she thought surely, child as she was, she must have troubles, too. She had no mamma; her papa was away; and Aunt Lydia was cross, and would not let her love her, even when she wished to do so. And then gradually, as Clara thought over her childish days, Kate's sorrow, Lord Cleveland,

and her first ball, she fell asleep ; and all these subjects seemed unaccountably crowded together in her dreams. Aunt Lydia was waltzing in her spectacles with Lord Cleveland ; Kate was standing in the centre of the room, her dress in a perfect blaze, which no one *would* put out, while some invisible power held her back from doing so herself ; and she felt she was only a child still, and wondered how she had got into so crowded an assembly. Then all became confused, and she knew no more until she woke next morning, and found it was a dream.

CHAPTER III.

"Dost thou know nothing of this,
To be awed at woman's beauty?
Beauty, like a summer's day,
Subdueth by sweet influences.
This is thy wondrous strength,
O beauty! conqueror of all:
The outline of our shadowy best,
The pure, the comely creature,
That winneth on the conscience with a saddening
 admiration,
And some untutor'd thirst for God,
The root of every pleasure."

M. TUPPER.

THE evening came that was to introduce Miss Howard to the *beau monde*; but no flattering agitation was in her breast. Perfectly unconscious of her own personal attractions, and the impression she might make, as well as of the fact of her being an heiress, she felt she was going to see people, with no idea of being noticed by them; and this gave an ease and calmness to her manner, which few, under similar circumstances, could have attained.

Curiosity impelled Kate to complete her toilet early, that she might see the effect of Clara's. What was her amazement when she found her cousin attired in a simple white dress, with small pink rosebuds in her hair and bosom, and, with the exception of a pearl necklace and bracelets, no other ornament. And surely, what could

have looked more lovely ! The flowing drapery, contrasted with the black hair and blue eyes, the snow-white neck, and beautifully-moulded arms, all joined to form a picture of uncommon beauty. Kate's admiration, in spite of her disappointment, could not be restrained.

" But, oh ! why wear so plain a dress, Clara ? "

" Simply because I think it the prettiest. "

" Then why so few jewels ? where are the diamonds ? "

" In my dressing-case, where, my dear Kate, if you please, they will remain ; their brilliancy might attract, and make me conspicuous. "

" Do you expect to pass unnoticed, then ? "

" Yes, I hope so—why not ? " seeing Kate's amused look.

" I wish you had had your hair in curls, then—if for nothing else, to oblige me. "

" Papa prefers my hair plain ; how can my little coz insinuate I would not please her ? " she added, kindly placing her arm round her neck and kissing her.

" Now, come, it is time to go, my dears ; are you ready ? " said Mrs Hamilton, entering the room.

" Quite ready, aunt ; I will go and tell papa, " said Clara, bounding from the room.

" Papa, the carriage is here. "

" Very well, dear ; come here, and let me look at my child. Very good taste !—perfect simplicity ! Nothing could make my Clara more lovely ! " were his expressions, as he surveyed her at a little distance ; then, taking his arm, they descended, and were soon on their way to Grosvenor Square.

* * * * *

"Wentworth, are you going to Lady Stanley's ball to-night?" said Lord Cleveland, as he threw down a paper, in the —— club-room. The question was addressed to a tall handsome man of some forty years of age, and who was occupied in reading the previous evening's debate.

"I beg your pardon, Cleveland; did you speak?" he said, after a pause.

"Are you going to Lady Stanley's ball to-night?"

"I did not think of it. You know how seldom I attend balls now. Is there anything new? I need not go to the house to-night if there is; though I rather wanted to hear St George speak," replied the Earl of Wentworth, indifferently.

"Well, do join me, then. There is a new star going to appear, before whose brilliancy all others will be thrown into the shade; and I particularly want your opinion of her, Wentworth, for I have some thoughts of ——"

"Marrying! have you? Well, I'm very glad to hear it —cannot do better," and the earl's features relaxed a little.

"Why, I did not say *that* positively; but you see there might be many advantages. Miss Howard is not only the most beautiful woman I ever saw, but—ahem!—*an heiress!*"

"And what difference should that make in the choice of a wife, Cleveland?" said Lord Wentworth, gravely.

"Why, none, certainly; but you see my padre thinks a great deal about it; and I should rather like to be married, after all. My mother and Frances were recom-

mending Miss Howard to me only yesterday. That was certainly only for her money, for they have neither of them seen her yet, — they only returned to town on Tuesday."

"If you take my advice, Cleveland, there are two things you ought to do before you marry — give up flirting, and to be sure you *love* the woman you desire to make your wife."

"All very good, no doubt, Wentworth ; but marriages for love are not quite so common as they used to be — it is not fashionable."

"Then the sooner you revive the custom the better, I think."

"Suppose you do it yourself, now ?" said Cleveland, laughing.

"I should be very glad to have the opportunity, if I could."

"And why not become a Benedict ?"

"Because I have not found a Beatrice."

"Do you mean to say, then, you never yet saw a woman you could love ? I thought every one loved truly once ; and, since I have seen Miss Howard, I have thought my time was coming, too."

"Then you think my time is past for feeling Cupid's darts ?"

"I did not mean that ; but when a man gets engrossed with politics, and reaches your age, I should say there is not much chance left for him. Your tastes, no doubt, grow more fastidious, so that it is almost impossible to please you."

"Mere beauty, elegance, or even accomplishments

would never charm me. There must be a mind, too, which shines out in words and actions. Because a girl is lovely, or an heiress, it does not follow that she is in other respects perfection. Rather the contrary—often the most beautiful are the least agreeable; and very probably this new star, as you name her, will soon be spoilt by the flatterers who surround her—who will praise her beauty and envy her wealth. Then how soon that freshness of girlhood will pass away, and the cold world will throw a shadow over all the innocence of youth! Yes, Cleveland, when you have lived as long as I have, you will find the truth of what I say. I have watched until weary, and seen this effect times without number. How often I have noticed a fair and beautiful girl enter a ball-room for the first time, and marked that lovely blush of maiden modesty glowing on her cheek, at the gaze her attractions called forth! And look at the change in a few months, or even weeks;—you see her borne unresistingly along by the tide of gaiety, and never again do you see those sweet blushes or retiring manners.” The earl took up the papers once more, as if to hide some emotion; but he sighed deeply, and it encouraged his companion to proceed.

“On my honour, Wentworth, I should not have given you credit for half such sentiment! I thought you had never any observation beyond the house.”

“You are very much mistaken, then. I merely took up politics to drown other feelings; and have nothing further to look forward to now, but seeing what service I can render my country.”

“But still, should you meet with a woman all perfection, you would marry?”

"Provided the lady (or rather angel) would have me—which is a question *you* never consider."

"Perhaps not. But why need you despair?"

"Because I have given up hope."

"You take a very gloomy view of things. If you will believe me, there are some exceptions to this rule."

"So I have heard, and so I have read in novels; but—excuse me, Cleveland—I never saw one."

"Well, watch Miss Howard, now; and if she does not prove an exception to your rule, why, I will never more have faith in woman."

"Then you have seen her. Is she the daughter of Sir Edward Howard? I heard they were to return to England."

"Yes, she is; and I have not only seen her, but enjoyed her society for a whole evening, and never was so charmed in my life."

"But you are so often charmed."

"So I often profess; but, believe me, for once I am in earnest. Miss Howard is so perfectly unaffected, and yet her conversation has such a brilliant simplicity about it, that except yourself, Wentworth, there is no one I ever conversed with that I like so well; and this is saying no little, for you have been a better friend to me than any one I have ever known."

"Thank you, Cleveland, for your frankness; well, what more of Miss Howard?"

"Oh, a great deal. There is so much genuine modesty, yet with such repose of manner, such quiet decision,—in fact, altogether, she is my ideal of a perfect woman, and I am quite persuaded all the flattery of the world could

net spoil her. You must see her, for she is as beautiful as she is agreeable—such eyes, like violets; calm, clear, and quite angelic. I declare when I saw her I thought of Annie Laurie—you remember the lines :—

“ Her brow is like the snow-drift,
Her neck is like the swan;
Her face it is the fairest
That ere the sun shone on;
And dark-blue is her e’e;”

and (he added, laughing)—

“ For bonnie Clara Howard,
I’d lay me down and dee.”

“ *Already!* Well done, Cleveland,” said the earl, laughing, too. “ Upon my word, you have interested me so much, I would not on any account miss the ball now.”

“ Do go—only mind you don’t steal her away from me by your superior attractions.”

“ Do not fear that,” replied the earl, as they parted.

* * * * *

Lady Stanley was delighted to notice among her guests that evening the Earl of Wentworth—he was so difficult to secure, as he almost invariably pleaded his political duties as an excuse for his absence. Besides being one of the greatest statesmen of the day, he was perhaps the handsomest and most talented man of the age—yet who so indifferent to public opinion as he! Conscious though he certainly was of his own powers, he was unostentatious in displaying them. How frequently do we find this! True greatness needs no applause. While those possessing inferior powers seek the praise of men as their highest honour, men of real sterling worth, who pursue their path through life with undeviating consistency, act-

ing at all times up to their principles, regardless of praise or blame, are honoured and valued for their unflinching integrity, which cares not to cope with the world, nor to meet its frowns.

"At last they are here!" said Lord Cleveland to his friend, as Clara, blushing deeply, entered, leaning on her father's arm. The earl gazed upon her lovely face as she was speaking to Lady Stanley; then turning to Cleveland, he said, in a low voice, "You are right, I think; the world will not spoil her—she will soar above it."

"My sister, Lady Frances Cleveland," said Lord Cleveland, as soon as there was a convenient opportunity for introducing her to Clara. Lady Frances bowed; and Miss Howard, as she raised her head, met the dark penetrating eyes of the earl's daughter, who was a tall, stylish woman, dressed in the height of fashion. Could any one have supposed her to have been the gay, laughing, Lord Cleveland's sister, with that cold, haughty expression, which, however, she tried to subdue in speaking to Clara? This was not so easily accomplished. The supercilious curl of the lip was still there, and the restless impatient eyes wandered round the room unceasingly. It was a great relief when the Countess of Harrington requested her daughter to introduce her to Miss Howard. She was far more easy and pleasant in manner than Lady Frances; but it was still agreeable to Clara to be led away by Lord Cleveland to join the dancers. Many and eager were the applications for her hand that night—but Clara soon felt fatigued; and declining to dance again, soon afterwards sought her father's side. Sir Edward was talking to Lord Wentworth, whom he had formerly known, and whom he seemed extremely glad to meet again.

"Would you favour me with an introduction to your daughter, Sir Edward?" he said.

"Certainly, my lord. Clara, Lord Wentworth, an old and valued friend of mind."

Clara gave him the sweetest smile: to be a friend of her father's was quite enough to insure her good opinion. And now a conversation was begun which charmed her. The earl seemed the *beau-idéal* of a gentleman in all respects. There was a freshness in all he said, instinct with sincerity: all his actions seemed the result of genuine motives. There was a loftiness in his conversation, indicative of noble ideas, far above the multitude who surrounded him. This Clara quickly perceived, and thus enjoyed a new source of pleasure. Sir Edward seemed delighted, and contrived to draw Clara out, much to the admiration of Lord Wentworth.

"I shall do myself the honour of waiting upon you, Sir Edward, the earliest opportunity."

"I shall be most happy to see you, my lord," said Sir Edward, as they stepped into the carriage to return home. And Clara, when she leaned back, thought the evening had passed very pleasantly.

"What an odious woman Lady Frances is!" exclaimed Claude Hamilton to his sister, after their uncle and cousin had retired.

"Why more so to-night than usual?"

"She is so contemptuous! She positively said to me this evening, that her brother had told her to expect a beauty in Clara; and indeed she could not discover any anything striking in her at all! Just like her! I told her what I thought—that I considered her the most perfect creature I had ever seen."

"How you would annoy her! You know she cannot bear others to be admired more than herself—more especially by you, Claude."

"As for that, it is of no consequence. Persons who, from envy, cannot give others their due, deserve to be put down occasionally," said Claude, indifferently.

"I am very sorry to hear of her giving vent to her ill-feelings about Clara, because she will only do herself harm by it: she made the same remark to Lord Wentworth."

"Indeed! and what did he say?"

"I am surprised at your ladyship's taste, as on all sides I hear how much Miss Howard is admired."

"Capital! Lord Wentworth is the man for me."

"Come, Claude, I must go; it is three o'clock."

"Good-night, then."

The Hamiltons' remarks were only just concerning Lady Frances Cleveland. There are some characters in the world—"few and far between," we hope—who cannot bear to hear the beauty or talent of others extolled, especially when they excel themselves. Lady Frances, however, belonged to this class; but, independently of the envy she felt, there was a malicious design in her words, which were intended to be heard by Kate, as she wished her to know, however little she thought of Clara's beauty herself, Lord Cleveland had been much charmed by it; which she knew would much mortify Kate, who had been the exclusive object of her brother's attention so long, and whom she had the greatest dread of him marrying. Again, in her depreciation of Miss Howard to Claude, she desired to lessen the admiration she saw he felt for his

cousin ; for, strange to say, Lady Frances had a heart, and one which could feel deeply. It had been wholly given to Claude Hamilton ; and now, fearful of her charms being superseded by so formidable a rival as Clara, she endeavoured to undervalue her in her cousin's eyes, that she might the more readily secure him for herself.

Lord Cleveland was evidently already in love with the beautiful heiress ; so his sister determined in every way to assist him in gaining the affections of Miss Howard, thereby securing him from a marriage with Kate, and also for ever putting aside any chance of a union between Claude and his cousin.

So Lady Frances, ere she closed her eyes in sleep, had determined to make herself agreeable to Clara, that her threefold purpose might be accomplished.

Far different were the feelings of Clara, who, after dismissing her maid, retired to rest, with the vain hope of sleeping. Now that the excitement of the evening had passed away, she felt restless and disquieted. "Is this pleasure ? is there any real gratification in the indulgence of amusements during those hours I have been accustomed to spend in repose ? Does it compensate for all this weariness ? Surely there must be something else, more satisfying than this !" thought Clara, and tears slowly found their way down her cheeks, as she pondered on whether there was not *solid* enjoyment to be found even in the world, or was she always to sigh in vain. There was, she felt, a longing, a thirsting for something, she knew not what, which at times pressed heavily upon her mind—a want of true happiness, which neither wealth nor affection could supply, for there was not one earthly

blessing she could wish for that she had not. In the solitude of her own chamber often now did the envied Clara Howard sigh for peace—peace to a conscience which said all was not well! Poor girl! she knew not yet who it is that can alone give happiness—she felt even now it was not the world; but alas! she had never read those beautiful words of the Redeemer of the world, “Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isaiah xlviii. 18), and so she knew not to whom to go for that peace which passeth all understanding. She resolved yet again to taste all the pleasures of the world, and by their utmost to fill the void within. Clara knew not her Creator. It never occurred to her that He who had formed her so wondrously, and endued her with power to look upward and trace the motions of the heavenly bodies, and downwards to search into the deepest caverns of the earth’s most hidden treasures, to transmit thought with the rapidity of lightning to another land, must have access to the most secret and hidden recesses of her own soul, and be cognisant of all her anxieties. She had never learnt to pray—so it did not occur to her then to throw herself on her knees and pour out her sorrows in the ear of that Invisible Being who has invited the confiding trust of all who need a friend to teach and comfort them. And restlessly she continued thinking on her bed, sleep refusing to lull her to unconsciousness. She looked back with pleasure on Lord Wentworth’s conversation—certainly she forgot her uneasiness when she listened to him; but then he had not lightened her difficulty. His conversation,

though so brilliant and clever, was only on worldly things. Certainly, in a ball-room, how could it be otherwise? "How weak I am, thus brooding over evils which my own foolishness makes for me! I *will* be happy—I must be ungrateful for all my blessings—I will struggle against this needless depression!" she exclaimed, impetuously. Then falling back, overwhelmed by fatigue, she wept long and bitterly; and at length, exhausted by her feelings, she sunk into a troubled slumber.

Thus she was without a ray of light to guide her through the dark and thorny path of life; for He who is the "Sun of righteousness," "the bright and morning Star," had yet to rise upon her benighted soul. The word had yet to be spoken, "Let there be light"—and it should be done in His own good time—then should she see the dark and hidden cause of all her misery, and find the way of peace and joy. Often God permits his chosen servants to wander thus in darkness. Sometimes he permits them to pass through the deep waters of affliction, and sometimes to taste all the vanities of the world, until they find them but vexation of spirit; but in all these he is secretly leading them to see the insufficiency of all created good to satisfy their cravings, and drawing them to lean only on him for their rest.

CHAPTER IV.

"Love!—what a volume in a word!
An ocean in a tear!
What concentrated joy or woe,
In blest or blighted love!"

TUPPER.

"WELL, my dear Clara, I have had no time to ask you how you liked your first ball?" said Sir Edward Howard to his daughter, the following day, when they were alone together in his dressing-room. Clara raised her mild blue eyes to his face, with an expression that puzzled him, and paused for a moment, ere she replied—"Upon the whole, I enjoyed it very much, papa; though I fancy I had anticipated too much pleasure from it."

"And what did my dear Clara wish for more?"

"Ah! there I am at a loss myself. I know of nothing that was wanting; and yet ——" She paused again.

"Well, my dear, proceed."

"I really don't know how to get on, papa; but I am so tired this morning, and was so thoroughly wearied last night, that I can hardly think the pleasures of a ball compensate for the fatigue afterwards."

"Well, perhaps not. You are a strange girl, Clara.

Instead of being glad to be free, as most young ladies would consider themselves to be, you seem to think gaiety no pleasure. I am half inclined to think you would rather read the newspaper to me?"

"Indeed I would, a thousand times; and I am glad you reminded me. The papers *are* come, I know; I saw Claude reading them just now. I will go and see if he is done with them," said Clara, rising and kissing her father affectionately. This was Clara's daily occupation. Her father, though he had no personal interest in politics, was yet strongly attached to party, and was always most anxious to hear all that went on in parliament; and his daughter read so well, he always preferred hearing her to reading himself. Perhaps there cannot be a less interesting occupation than this for a young lady; but Clara never thought of this. With her, duty was a pleasure; and whatever her father liked, that always gratified her. She had, however, often read Lord Wentworth's speeches, and been always pleased with them; and now that she had seen and conversed with him, they would be doubly interesting. Sir Edward always said he considered him the finest speaker of the day; and as his opinions exactly coincided with his own, a speech of his was sure to be welcome.

"Read yesterday's paper first, Clara—we did not finish it—and Wentworth's speech is there. I would not miss that on any account."

Clara proceeded to read it, and was really delighted with it, though the subject was not one she understood much about before. When she had finished, and Sir Edward's opinion had been given, Clara ventured to

express her pleasure at having conversed with the earl the evening before.

"I do not doubt, my dear, you would enjoy it. It quite made me feel young again to see and hear him once more—there is no man I esteem more highly. I knew him years ago ; he was then quite a young man, and of course not the great statesman he now is. But I always prophesied he would be an extraordinary character. His greatness has not spoilt him, either—he is as noble-minded and honourable as he was then. I really shall be particularly glad to renew our acquaintance, and I hope my Clara will like it, too."

"I doubt not I shall very much. He is my father's friend, and you are not so very easily pleased with people, my padre, excepting with your little Clara."

"And that is because I could not find a fault in her if I tried."

"Oh, papa, you must not say so !" said Clara, putting her hand on his mouth. "You little know how naughty I often feel."

"I never see it then, darling."

"No ; I should not like you to know it, because you would be so much ashamed of me."

"But do tell me, dearest, is there anything you wish for ? You know all I have is at your disposal."

"Oh, papa ! indeed I have nothing to wish for. I should be the most ungrateful girl possible if I had !"

"But still you seem to imply a want of something. Perhaps it may be a heart to love you—not as I do, but some one who will be dearer than ever I can be. Well, I trust, my child, I shall some day see you happily married to one who can appreciate you."

Clara burst into tears. "My dearest father, you cannot tell how you distress me. I wish for nothing; and to be married, would be the greatest trouble I could have."

"I trust not, my child. Listen to me. You know how precarious my health is. Should anything happen to me, you would feel very lonely in the world; how much better would it be if you had a guide to comfort you when I am gone. You are now just entering upon the world, my dear girl. You will probably receive much flattery, and many offers; for besides your beauty and attractions, there are many mercenary men, who, knowing you to be an heiress, will endeavour to gain your affections—therefore I would have you be careful before you suffer yourself to love. On the other hand, there are some men of sterling worth and excellence, free from every interested feeling, who must love you for yourself. I do not wish you to marry for rank or wealth, but you shall be entirely free to make your own choice. I have too much confidence in you to suppose you would ever place your affections on an unworthy object. Now, dear, I have said my say. Do not grieve about it. I conceived it better to tell you what I thought about these things; and as a suitable opportunity occurred this morning, I determined to avail myself of it."

Clara raised her tearful eyes to his face, and tried to assume her father's cheerful manner; but her heart felt almost bursting. He had spoken of dying, and she saw her own feelings had been misunderstood, which added much to her grief; and she resolved never again to allow him the smallest chance of supposing her unhappy, as it only seemed to distress him, and he could not sympathise in her longings, hopes, and fears. She threw her

arms round his neck, and besought him earnestly to make himself happy : she would endeavour always to follow his advice, though she believed she could never love any one sufficiently to leave him. Just then, Kate came to fetch her away to the Countess of Harrington, who had called upon her. Lady Harrington was a most fascinating, winning woman, when she chose to be so, though this, in her ladyship's opinion, was not always worth her while ; but on the present occasion she had an end to gain, and she even exceeded her usual civilities in cordiality to Clara, who felt overpowered by her volubility. Lady Frances was there too, and tried to look amiable ; but she was by no means such an adept in making herself agreeable as her mother. When Claude sauntered in, it was impossible not to notice the change in her manner. He seemed to infuse warmth into her cold heart ; but he was careless and gay as ever, and only paid her the commonest civilities—while his eyes incessantly wandered to his lovely cousin, who sat perfectly unconscious of the jealousy she was creating. Nothing could be more pressing than the invitations Lady Harrington gave Clara before parting, begging she would allow them to have as much of her society as possible during their stay in London ; while Lady Frances bit her lip, and could not help feeling pleased when Clara said she very seldom left her father. Though Kate Hamilton was, with her cousin, included for courtesy's sake by the ladies, the warm blood that rushed into her face plainly shewed he knew her society was not desired. Other visitors being announced, the countess and her daughter took leave ; and hour after hour Clara sat patiently listening to the polite nothings

of the day, kind and courteous in her manner to all, but longing to escape to her father, who was obliged to keep his room all day. Lord Wentworth made a short visit ; but as Sir Edward was not to be seen, and Miss Howard's time was so much occupied, he quickly took leave, hoping to have an early opportunity of meeting her again. It really was a great relief when the last visitor had departed. Sir Edward was so well known and remembered, that it seemed to Clara as if half the world had come to renew the acquaintance.

But it would be needless to enter into the routine of Clara's season in London. Balls two or three times a-week, private concerts, the opera, paying and receiving visits, drives and rides in the park, filled up the time which she allowed herself from her father. The Howards had taken a house in a fashionable neighbourhood, about a month after their return to England ; and though Clara felt happier in once more having a home of her own, yet she missed her merry little companion, Kate Hamilton, and contrived to have her much with her. A sincere affection had sprung up between the cousins, as is often the case where there is great difference of character ; though Kate admired and looked up to Clara as a being altogether superior to herself—and truly it was so—the fine intellectual and moral excellences in her character were those rarely to be met with. But though there was many a fair bud of promise for better things, ready to spring forth and bear fruit, the beams of the Holy Spirit of grace were yet wanting to breathe a quickening influence, and bring them to maturity ; else what availed those fair bud-dings ? they could but wither and die. Clara had now

fairly tried the world ; she had seen and tasted all it had to offer, and happiness and peace were not to be found in it. Long ere this, as Sir Edward had said, she might have been the affianced bride of wealth, rank, and talent ; and yet there was no kindred spirit to her own, no one who had brought rest to her troubled soul. Alas ! all had been tried, but it was of no avail. She had once endeavoured to pray, but words failed her. She felt too guilty ; she feared a pure and holy God would not look upon a sinner like herself ; she was almost as a heathen. The new and living way of access through a Mediator, who partakes both of the divine and human natures, and who in his own person has cancelled sin, and wrought out a perfect righteousness for those who need it, was unknown to her ; and thus the name of Jesus—precious refuge for the guilty!—brought no relief, for she never read his Word. A Bible never came in her way. Instead of attending church, the habit of reading to her father was continued, and she tried to persuade herself she was acting rightly to yield to all his wishes. Thus passed her life—often in anguish of spirit, oftener still in vain attempts to subdue her convictions.

Lord Cleveland's heart, during all this time, had not been proof against the attractions of Miss Howard, and he really loved her ; but day after day passed by, and he could not make up his mind to tell her so, fearful lest he should be rejected, as his fascinations had apparently been lavished in vain, and he had now himself to suffer the pain he had caused others, by trifling with them for his own amusement.

And Lord Wentworth, too, had at length foud the

woman he had long sought for ; but never by one word or expression had Clara guessed his intense devotion to her—for it seemed as if all the pent-up affections of his heart had suddenly been opened, and gushed forth consequently in all the greater torrent. But he was a man well accustomed to subdue his feelings, whenever he thought them gaining undue ascendancy over him. He knew that Cleveland had generously confided the secret of his affection to him ; and so long as there was any chance of his being able to win Clara's love, he determined to bury his own in the depths of his heart. And nobly he acted his part ; for no one guessed the secret love that dwelt under his proud and manly bearing. He was, however, a frequent and welcome guest at Sir Edward Howard's. He often spent his evenings there when his friends were alone, both Clara and her father being always delighted to see him—the latter even pressing him to come every night, when not otherwise engaged ; and though the earl felt, each time he saw that lovely image, it only entwined itself more closely round his heart, he could not resist the temptation of breathing the same air with her, hearing her sweet voice, or gazing on her perfect beauty. He knew not whether any other feelings dwelt in her heart for him than those of mere friendship, though he did sometimes think her face looked sad, and her lip quivered, and once a tear lay cradled in her eye, which he would have given worlds to wipe away with the hand of love. But no ! he felt he dare not allow himself to hope that he could have made such an impression upon her as to call forth any emotion ; the thought was preposterous, and he blamed himself for indulging it a moment. He knew not the load that rested on her

heart—for though he could not remedy it, yet he could have sympathised in it ; for Clara—though she had once thought he, who was so clever, so amiable, so much looked up to, might have solved her difficulty—soon found he was often depressed himself, and knew not where to turn for comfort ; so her bright day-dream was over, and she must bear her grief alone. With Lord Wentworth there was often a feeling of longing for rest, but its intensity had passed away with years, and he had plunged into the tangled mazes of political life, from which there was now no escape ; and therefore he seldom allowed himself to think of anything better and more satisfying—even of Christ, who is the refuge of his people, their hiding-place and rest.

And so stood matters at the close of the season, when people were thinking of leaving for their country-seats. Sir Edward expressed his intention of returning once more to Beech-hall ; and, with a light heart, Clara obeyed her father's directions to write to the housekeeper to make preparations for their return in a fortnight. How her heart danced with delight at returning to her childhood's home, where no Aunt Lydia would now watch her, and she could roam about free, and she hoped happy, among her own hills or woods, and listen once more to the little birds carolling their hymn of praise ! However, though she had longed for all this, she had never asked her father to take her there, knowing, as soon as he felt well enough, he would return again to Wilmington.

* * * * *

“ Miss Howard has not ventured out with you this morning. I thought she would surely have availed herself of the earliest opportunity of coming here—she is so

fond of paintings," said Lord Cleveland to Miss Hamilton and her brother, in the Royal Academy, one morning shortly after the exhibition had opened.

Kate blushed slightly, and replied—"My cousin declined coming with us to-day. Sir Edward prefers coming early before the rooms are so crowded, and she wished to wait for him."

"I hope Sir Edward was better when you saw him last?"

"Oh yes, thank you. Clara told me yesterday he was saying how very much better he felt; therefore they are proposing to leave town shortly."

"Indeed! I had no idea they intended returning so early—it seems such a pity for them to leave just now. Miss Howard must regret the idea of being buried in the country."

"I assure you my cousin is in raptures at the prospect. She seems quite tired of London life, and will be only too glad to get away."

"You surprise me; but I must wish you good morning—my time is limited," said Lord Cleveland, politely bowing himself away.

Kate turned to look more closely at the painting they had been examining; but it was to hide a quivering lip, as she thought, had her cousin been with them, how gladly Lord Cleveland would have lingered.

No sooner had the young nobleman left the Academy, than with rapid steps he took the road to — Square.

"Lord Cleveland," said the butler, ushering him into the presence of Clara, who was reading. She immediately

rose, but her greeting was only cold. She had no desire to have a *tête-à-tête* with him. Her father was out, however, and she saw no chance of escaping without rudeness. Lord Cleveland seemed agitated, and spoke incoherently. Clara answered him with composure ; but he seemed unwilling to take up any subject she proposed. At length, after an abrupt pause, as if determined to rush into his subject, he said hastily—

“ Miss Howard, you must have been aware, since the moment I saw you, how much I have loved you. I have longed ardently for an opportunity to tell you so ; but fear, arising from circumstances, has prevented me offering to you my hand and heart. Do not refuse me,” he added, eagerly, as he saw Clara rise ; “ I cannot, if you will but believe me—I declare I cannot live without you. Do not, I beseech you, break my heart by a refusal.”

The impetuosity of this speech almost deprived Clara of utterance ; while his excited manner made her for the moment nearly doubt his sanity. She, however, replied with her usual gentleness and calmness of manner—

“ I am extremely sorry, Lord Cleveland, to be the means of causing you pain ; but you well know I have never given you the slightest cause to suppose your affection was returned. Our tastes and feelings are so utterly dissimilar, a union between us could be productive of no happiness. Much as I grieve to say it, I feel I must at once tell you, I can never be your wife.”

She spoke firmly ; and the decisive manner in which she at once refused him, she hoped would have concluded this painful interview. But to her extreme astonishment and indignation, Lord Cleveland began a vehement expostu-

lation, in a most passionate manner. Never from his youth having met with any disappointment, and accustomed to make all other wills subservient to his own, he could not bear to be thwarted in this his first attachment. Alike forgetful of the respect due to her he loved, he pleaded that she would marry him even though she might feel no attachment ; he would make her love him, and his life he would devote to make her happy. Indignant at his pertinacity, Clara answered him with dignity that she was by no means accustomed to such scenes as these, at the same time moving towards the door. A hasty and ungentlemanly wish escaped the young nobleman's lips, that she might repent her conduct, which, the moment she was gone, he would have given anything to recall ; but it was too late, and he left the house more angry with himself than with the refusal he had met with. Just at the same moment, the Hamiltons' carriage drove up from the Academy with Claude and Kate, who had promised to take luncheon with the Howards.

"Cleveland, I declare !" exclaimed Claude, angrily, as he saw the young nobleman, anxious to escape observation, turn another way. "Kate, I thought he told you half an hour ago he had an engagement which prevented his remaining with us ?"

Kate's face was turned from her brother, so that he might not see the unwonted paleness it had assumed. "He spoke of no engagement—only that he must go."

"No ! he only wished for one. You may depend upon it, Clara has had an offer from him while we have been away. Will she have him, Kate ?" he added, almost fiercely.

"I am not in her confidence, Claude," replied his sis-

ter ; but oh ! she thought, if I were she, I know whether I could not love him !

Claude Hamilton loved Clara very deeply, although he never thought of proposing for her hand ; but she had been so kind to him, and assisted him with his father in so many little ways, that he could not bear the idea of seeing her united to a man like Lord Cleveland, who, he felt, could not appreciate her as the man she married ought to do ; and Claude inwardly felt indignant that he should dare to think of being accepted. Claude looked up to Clara as a sort of guardian angel. She would so often speak to him about his extravagances ; and often, half-playfully, half-gravely, she would try to warn him of the consequences of his folly ; and then he would swear she was an "angel," and he *would amend*, if she would only shew him how, and Clara would smile at his foolishness, and give him a lecture.

She received them just the same as usual when they returned to luncheon ; and her calmness of manner was such, that the Hamiltons almost began to think themselves mistaken in their conjecture ; and as Sir Edward appeared almost immediately afterwards, they found it impossible to satisfy their curiosity. Claude left soon after luncheon ; but Clara begged Kate would remain with her for the rest of the day, which was too great a pleasure to be resisted.

"Would you like a drive, Kate ? It is so delicious a day, I think we could not do better," said Clara.

Kate assented, and the carriage was ordered. As Kate re-entered the drawing-room to seek Clara, she overheard Sir Edward say to Clara, who was kneeling by his side—

"My child, remember your happiness is the end and aim of my life. Are you sure you do not love him?"

"Quite sure, my own dear father," was the earnest reply.

"Bless you, darling!"

And Kate just then coming in, no more was said. Somehow there seemed a load removed from her mind, for she fancied it was of Lord Cleveland they were speaking. They enjoyed their drive through the park more than Kate had imagined they should have done. In returning, they met Lady Harrington and her daughter. The cold, haughty move from the former, and none whatsoever from the latter, called forth a blush to Clara's cheek; but she took no further notice, though there seemed sorrow in her gentle eye. When they reached home, Clara complained of headache, and retired with Kate to her boudoir, where she lay down on her couch; and Kate took up a book with the vain endeavour to read, while longing to hear from her cousin's own lips the result of the morning's interview. Clara's head was turned partly from her, but she discovered tears falling through the slender fingers every now and then. But after a time, Clara sufficiently recovered from her emotion to enter cheerfully into conversation. It was now Kate's turn to be uneasy; and at last, unable to resist, she asked Clara if Lord Cleveland had called in the morning. She replied, he had; and Kate suddenly added, in an earnest voice—"Tell me, Clara, as you pity me, did he tell you he loved you?"

There was a pause, during which thoughts rushed into Clara's mind as to the expediency of telling her cousin all. To none but her father had she ever confided interviews

of that kind ; but long ere this, Clara had penetrated her cousin's secret, and had longed to comfort her. She thought perhaps it might be better to tell her the truth at once, so that her mind might be somewhat relieved by knowing she had no wish to be her rival. She therefore answered, " Yes, Kate, he did."

" And you?—what did you say?" she exclaimed, anxiously, and trembling with emotion.

" I told him his affection could never be returned," said Clara, in a clear, decided voice.

This settled the point at once for Kate. Her feeling of relief was so great, she could only weep passionately. Clara knew the cause of her tears, and suffered the first burst of feeling to subside ere she attempted comfort. She then gently and affectionately spoke to her cousin, assuring her she had long known her secret ; and tenderly she soothed her, by telling her she was really much more suited to be Lord Cleveland's wife than herself.

" Ah! but he does not love me ; it is only you he has ever felt affection for!" exclaimed Kate.

" He thinks so now ; but I feel persuaded a time will come when he will be as convinced as myself that it was much better I refused him. My tastes and feelings would never have suited his, as I told him ; and really, Kate, I should not be surprised if he discovered you were the woman of all others who would love him best."

" No, no! I dare not think that. But oh! Clara, keep my secret safe! My cheeks burn when I think any one knows it!"

" Trust me, dear Kate. No one will ever know what has passed between us."

When Miss Hamilton had left her, Clara began to consider well how it were possible to serve her cousin ; but she saw no way of bringing Lord Cleveland to see her merits, as now she concluded all intercourse with herself would cease. She must therefore trust to time to heal the wound she had herself inflicted, and then she hoped her cousin would be remembered. She loved Kate warmly. The unselfishness of her character had been fully shewn, for never by word or action had she betrayed the slightest degree of jealousy for her cousin, even when the greatest attentions had been lavished upon her by the man she loved. Though Clara had been a little disappointed in her cousin at first, as she hoped to have found a friend in her who would have assisted her in finding out the good she longed to do, yet her simplicity, amiability, and invariable good temper, made her forget her disappointment in her character.

“ I wish I had a friend who would guide me—it would be so delightful to do good in the world—and I know not how to begin,” she thought, when she ceased to think of Kate. Poor Clara had not yet learnt to believe in a Friend who cannot fail, and who is ever willing to assist those who truly seek Him. But she must wait His good time, and He would even send an earthly guide to lead her right. And though in the sharp furnace of affliction she must be tried, until all the dross was removed, yet surely the Saviour’s image should ere long be reflected in her character, and, walking in his footsteps, she would have joy and peace in believing.

CHAPTER V.

"As pants the wearied hart for cooling springs,
That sinks, exhausted, in the summer's chase—
So pants my soul for Thee, great King of kings!
So thirsts to reach Thy sacred dwelling-place!
Why throbs my heart? why sinks the saddening soul?
Why droop to earth with various woes oppress'd?
My years shall yet in blissful circles roll,
And *peace* be yet an inmate of this breast."

BISHOP LOWTH.

"THE world's breath has passed over, and left her untainted. I knew it would be so," thought Lord Wentworth, as they were wandering through the apartments of the Duke of S——, one evening about a week before the proposed return of the Howards to Beech-hall.

There was no impediment now to the earl telling her all he longed for: Lord Cleveland had frankly communicated his refusal, so that his fears of being a rival were now removed, and he bent his whole soul to winning Clara. But he dared not hope. She never appeared conscious of his attentions; and certainly her manner never betrayed agitation or confusion when speaking to him. But all this he knew would be inconsistent with her character: she was always calm and self-possessed, even when he had seen her alarmed, or called upon to act with firmness, which, in some instances, he had seen

her obliged to do. Therefore he hoped that, in her heart, she might have some deeper feeling for him than was manifested in his presence.

"Have you seen the paintings? As you decline dancing, may I shew them to you?" said Lord Wentworth, offering his arm to conduct her.

Clara assented, and they entered another apartment. Here they found Lord Cleveland, whom Clara had not seen or heard of since the unfortunate visit he had paid her some weeks before. To her surprise, he greeted her in his usual manner, which she returned with equal courtesy, supposing he would then have left them; but he added (while Lord Wentworth appeared engaged with an engraving)—"Would Miss Howard allow me to apologise for my rudeness the last time we met? My extreme misery must be my excuse; I believe I did not know what I said."

"So I supposed, my lord. Believe me, I thought no more of your hasty speech, feeling sure after-reflection would convince you it was not right."

"Indeed, it has. I have been most wretched ever since, though I have endeavoured to appear gay and careless."

"I am sure I regret that you have felt any uneasiness on my account," said Clara, kindly.

"Then you will pardon me?"

"Certainly, if you think there *is* anything to pardon."

"You are most generous—thank you, many times. Now, I must not trespass upon your attention any longer."

Clara gave him her hand in token of reconciliation. He raised it respectfully to his lips, and departed.

"Cleveland is a very nice fellow ; he has some very noble qualities," said Lord Wentworth, after he had quitted the room.

"Yes, I believe so," was the brief reply, while a slight blush dyed her cheek.

Sir Edward just then joined them, to ask if Clara were ready to return.

"How soon do you leave town, my lord ? We intend going next week. I suppose we shall all take flight together ?" said Sir Edward.

"Indeed, I have not made up my mind about going at all. I have no pleasure in the country all alone—it is dull work."

"Well, will you come to us for a time ? There is excellent shooting about Wilmington, and we shall be most glad of your company. You used to be fond of a gun ; I cannot promise you any other amusement."

"I shall be only too happy to accept your invitation, Sir Edward ; nothing could give me so much pleasure," and joy literally lighted up the eyes of the earl ; and as he handed Clara into the carriage, she could hardly avoid noticing the silent pressure of the hand, while his eye for a moment met hers.

The next morning, when Clara entered the breakfast-room, she found her father with an immense pile of unopened letters before him, which he seemed disinclined to read.

"Dear papa, what a packet ! Where can all those be from ?" she exclaimed.

"You may well wonder, my dear. I am quite put out about them. I conclude, however, they are petitions for the living of Wilmington."

"Wilmington, papa! Is Mr Gray dead?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Indeed, I heard Claude say something about having seen it mentioned in the paper; but really to think of twenty-five applications for three hundred pounds a-year! I shall never have patience to read them all, I am sure."

"May I do it?" said Clara, eagerly.

"With pleasure; and pray do as you like about the choice—I care nothing about it."

"Poor old Mr Gray! I remember him very well; and dear mamma, did she not like him very much?"

"Indeed she did. I believe he was a great comfort to her on her death-bed. She died very happily, poor thing. How she prayed for you and me!" Sir Edward seemed much affected. He seldom mentioned his wife; but when he did, it was always with emotion.

"I wonder Mr Gray never came to see me, then, after mamma died," said Clara.

"I fancy he used to want to see you often, but your Aunt Lydia never liked him, and I have reason to believe she never would permit him to speak to you."

"Oh! how I wish I had known! And now it is too late—he was such a good old man."

"Better as it is. Most likely, my dear, he might only have filled your mind with gloomy ideas. He was rather given to melancholy views of religion, which I should not have liked to see you infected with. Now, come, we will have breakfast, and then you shall enter upon your laborious work."

When it was concluded, Clara took the notes into her lap.

"Shall I read them to you, papa?"

"Pray, spare me, my dear. I would not be tormented with them on any account."

"But how shall I know how to choose, papa?—it seems such a responsibility."

Sir Edward laughed. "Beware of men who praise themselves, or seem to exalt the office of priest."

"I really hardly understand you, papa. I know so little about these things."

"You certainly are as innocent as a child ; but the fact is, lately some new tenets have arisen in the Church. Men try to lay a great stress upon good works, fastings, &c. Now, though I do not think much about these things myself, yet, in justice to the memory of Mr Gray, I feel it would be better to make an appointment that would have pleased the poor old man ; and the people at Wilmington are so simple, better not to introduce among them a clergyman who will teach them new doctrines."

"Yes, I think so too, papa ; but I wish you would explain these things more fully to me some time."

"Better not trouble yourself about them."

"But, dear papa, some time, no doubt, I shall hear more, and then how shall I be able to choose the good? Would it not be better to tell me wherein is the error?"

"Yes, perhaps so some time ; but I must run away now, darling. Good-bye!"

The look of doubt still on Clara's face made him pause a moment, and add—"I am not particularly partial to any party in the Church, my dear. What I mean is, that some men want to make a great show of religion, while I must own I think the less parade we make about it the

better. Choose a man who seems humble—that is all,” and he hastily left the room.

Clara drew a small table to her side, and began perusing the letters with great interest. She was very intently engaged in this business, and had read some twenty, when the footman announced that a lady in the drawing-room wished to see her. She had come, she said, from the country, and had hoped to see Sir Edward ; but hearing he was out, she would feel very much obliged if Miss Howard would speak to her, as she was obliged to leave town in the afternoon, and her business was of great importance. Clara immediately laid aside her letters, and entered the drawing-room. A lady in deep mourning rose.

“I did not give my name, Miss Howard, as I did not think you would remember it.”

Clara bowed, and the lady proceeded—“My uncle, Mr Gray, you will probably have heard, is dead.”

“I have received the intelligence, with much regret, this morning,” said Miss Howard, gently.

The lady’s distress overpowered her for a moment. She then continued—“Yes ! he is dead, and I am indeed very lonely. He has been more than a father to me for five years, and I am now on my way to another home, which I expect to reach to-day ; but it was not to trouble you with *my* affairs, Miss Howard, that I have waited upon you this morning, but to fulfil a dying request of my poor uncle’s.”

“I am sorry my father is not at home ; but if there is anything I can do for you, I shall be most glad to do it,” said Clara, kindly.

"Thank you. I doubt not you will be able to prevail upon Sir Edward to grant my petition. You will probably have had many applications for the living?"

Again Clara bowed.

"May I ask if you have already made an appointment?"

"No, we have not."

"I am very glad I have arrived in time. I much feared I should not. Mr Gray was very much attached to Wilmington, and he so much dreaded lest a clergyman should obtain the living who might hold erroneous doctrines. This distressed him much, and he begged me to ask Sir Edward if he would allow a friend of his to have the offer of it."

"Oh, I am sure papa would. You have relieved us from a great embarrassment. We knew not how to make a proper appointment, knowing none of the applicants personally."

"I am most grateful for your kindness. I will leave you the name and address of the gentleman, and I can truly say I am sure you will never have any reason to regret the appointment. Mr Langford is a true disciple of our blessed Master's, and his only desire is to do good, and to win souls for Christ. He holds the same views my uncle did, and was a great friend of his."

Quite a load seemed removed from Clara's heart by this announcement. All fears about her responsibility seemed removed. She had no doubt Mr Gray was a good man, and knew who would be most suitable for Wilmington, and she warmly expressed her gratitude to Mrs Harris (Mr Gray's niece), who soon after took her leave, as her

time was so limited. When Sir Edward returned, as Clara had expected, he immediately concurred in her desire ; and the letter was despatched to Mr Langford, begging his acceptance of the living, and wishing him to take possession as soon as possible, as the place was left without any one to take the duty. The return of post brought an answer accepting the living, with no objection to enter upon it at once, as he had been enabled to make arrangements for so doing. The letter was simply and gratefully expressed ; even Sir Edward was pleased with it. Ah ! in after years how often Clara saw the hand of God in this, guiding and directing her in the choice of a fit person to minister at Wilmington ! They heard also from the housekeeper at Beech-hall, begging, if convenient, they would postpone their coming for a few weeks, as the alterations Sir Edward had planned were so extensive that the workpeople found it impossible to complete them in time ; so they decided to remain another month in London—and though for herself Clara might have regretted the postponement, yet it afforded her the satisfaction of discovering that Lord Cleveland was again becoming a more frequent visitor at the Hamiltons'. He had been first drawn on to talk to Kate of Clara, to extol her beauty and excellence, and Kate was ever ready to admire and sympathise ; then by degrees he found out that Miss Hamilton had a very fine pair of eyes, which, though very different from Clara's, yet sparkled so beautifully, he could not resist their fascination. She sung and played so well, she had a light step in dancing, and such a fund of good-humour and amiability, that he could not help almost loving her. It often happens that two people are

drawn together by sympathy for one particular object—and so it was with Lord Cleveland and Kate ; and Clara had the satisfaction of seeing, ere she left town, that her little cousin was in a fair way of becoming Lady Cleveland.

“ My last night at the opera ! Well, though fascinating, I don’t mind,” said Miss Howard to her cousin, as they hurried down to the carriage, fearful of being late.

“ Oh, how can you be so glad to go away ? ”

“ I cannot help it, for I long to breathe the pure air of the country. London seems so close, and everything looks scorched, in the parks—everywhere,” replied Clara.

“ Ah, but there are pleasures that compensate. I wish we always lived in London,” said Kate, a little sorrowfully.

“ For you there may be pleasures—you enjoy gaiety so much ; and other things, too, there are to regret,” Clara added, archly. Kate blushed, but was glad there was no time to reply.

CHAPTER VI.

"Most earnest was his voice ! most mild his look !
As with raised hands he blest his parting flock.
He is a faithful pastor of the poor ;—
He thinks not of himself ;—his Master's words,
' Feed, feed my sheep,' are ever at his heart,
The cross of Christ is aye before his eyes.
* * * * *

Sweet is the sunny nook, to which my steps
Have brought me, hardly conscious where I roam'd,
Unheeding where,—so lovely all around
The works of God, array'd in vernal smile."

GRAHAM.

"THE horses will not stand any longer, my dear," said Sir Edward to his daughter, on the morning fixed for their departure.

"I am ready, papa. Again, good-bye, Kate. Do not forget your promise to visit us soon," said Clara, gaily, as she entered the carriage, with a light heart, to quit London. The journey was not completed until the second day—for they travelled the whole way in their own carriage, as being the easiest mode for Sir Edward ; and on the evening of the 3d of July, they entered the picturesque village of Wilmington. It was one of those villages with a green in the centre, and neat little thatched cottages scattered here and there, with pretty gardens attached to

them. The people were all assembled to greet Sir Edward and his daughter, regarding whom much curiosity was felt, it was so long since either had been seen. The people pressed forward with great eagerness, and all joined in a hearty cheer as the carriage drove slowly through the place.

"Ay! she's bonnie—she's bonnier than her mother," said one; "Bless them both!" said a second; while a third added, "Long life to them!"

Both Sir Edward and his daughter felt quite affected by all the good wishes and kind feeling expressed; and stopping the carriage, they both alighted to speak a few words to the villagers.

"Shall we walk home?" said Sir Edward. "I feel so well, I should really like to do so, if you have no objections."

"Oh! with pleasure," said Clara, taking her father's arm. "Oh! there's the dear old church—and the parsonage, how lovely and peaceful it looks—and what splendid roses!" exclaimed Clara, in rapture, as they passed the garden gate, through which they had a peep at the pretty little place. Just then a gentleman came out from the parsonage, and seeing a lady and gentleman slowly passing down the road, preceded by a travelling carriage, he turned that way, and soon came up to them. Sir Edward concluded at once by his dress it was Mr Langford, and stopping, spoke to him, introducing himself and his daughter. Mr Langford bowed, and expressed his pleasure at seeing them, and hoped they were not fatigued by their journey; then wishing them good evening, said he hoped to have the pleasure of waiting upon them next day, and departed.

"A very nice, unassuming man," said Sir Edward. Clara agreed ; but the various sensations she was experiencing, on returning once more to her home, made her fail to observe Mr Langford's appearance. She knew not whether he was old or young, good-looking or plain ; she only thought his voice was very pleasant, and his manner gentlemanly. They continued their walk until they entered the park, where Clara seemed bewildered with joy, all was so lovely. The fine old trees ; the lovely view ; the calm lake, into which the sun was just dipping his departing rays ; the lambs skipping about ; the timid deer starting away at the sound of the wheels ; and, above all, the gray towers of Beech-hall rising before them in solemn grandeur,—all combined to form a picture so exquisite, that Clara exclaimed in rapture, "Oh, papa ! England is the most beautiful country in the world !—where have we ever seen a view like this ?"

"True, my dear, it is very beautiful ; the trees have grown very fast these years—almost too much ; there is one there that would be much better down," said Sir Edward, in a quiet, calculating way, but ill-suited to sympathise with the feelings of delight his daughter experienced.

There were many improvements to be seen even in the park, which Sir Edward had planned. For the last month or two, gardeners, carpenters, painters, and upholsterers had been employed within and without the house ; quite an excitement had prevailed among the people at the idea of the Howards' return, and all had tried to render every assistance in finishing the place before they arrived. After being refreshed by tea, Sir Edward declared himself

able to accompany Clara into the garden, and see a few of the improvements that had been made. Never was Clara's step so light and free as when she now tripped along by her father on the soft turf—sometimes bending her elegant figure to peep at a small flower ; now trying to reach some roses, trained in arches, in different parts of the garden. Each well-remembered little nook near the house was visited, till warned to return by the falling dew, so prejudicial to the delicate health of her father.

“ Oh ! what beautiful glass doors !—did you have that alteration made lately, dear papa ? ” said Clara, as they turned round the side of the house, to come in by another way.

“ Yes, dear. You said you should like that room for your own ; so I thought you would like to have them better than a window, as it would be pleasanter than having to go in and out another way.”


“ Ah, how very kind to think of it ! A thousand thanks ! ” and she pressed his hand closer as they re-entered the house. Sir Edward then retired ; while Clara, anxious to see her own apartment, returned quickly through the hall, and entered the room where the new doors had been placed. Very beautiful was the effect, as the moon shone on the amber glass, casting a faint golden shadow all around. Clara could see all had been re-furnished and beautifully arranged ; but as it was growing late, she left further inspection till the morrow. She continued for some time in deep thought, looking out into the garden. All was peaceful and calm without, while the anxious beatings of her own heart told that all was not peace within. The fountain, with the dolphin's head, was near her—its waters were hushed ; but as she stepped

out, the gentle rippling of the little brook she had loved so much as a child, was heard like a soft murmur. Near her grew the fine old beech-tree of which Sir Edward was so proud, and under whose cool spreading branches Clara thought of the hours she might enjoy in reading. Around her, grew flowers of every description, perfuming the air; while a few paces further was the little white gate, beyond which was the brook, and the path to the village. Clara stood gazing upon it until her eyes filled with tears, and remembrances of her infancy crowded upon her, leading her to walk forward, and peep into the wood. She thought of the first time she had ever seen that gate opened, and the gray-haired pastor come through it, when she was only three years old, and was playing at bathing her dolls in the fountain. She distinctly remembered his grave but kind look as he stroked back her hair, and said, "Bless you, little darling! May your heavenly Father look upon you—you will soon be motherless!" And then he slowly and sorrowfully entered the house; and she wondered why he looked so sad, and turned to ask the maid, that took care of her while Lewis was with her mamma, who "was her Father in heaven;" and the girl told her, "God, who made her." And then she inquired what Mr Gray meant when he said she would soon be motherless; then the nurse looked confused, and said, "She didn't know;" but the child knew by instinct she was not speaking the truth, and asked no more questions. She longed to know about her Father in heaven, but the golden opportunity was lost, and she felt her mind was now almost as dark as then. Afterwards she remembered Lewis coming to fetch her to her mamma, who was very ill, and she

must make no noise, and not talk ; then she was lifted on the bed, where her mother was supported by pillows, and her papa stood by, holding her hand, and looking very sad ; and then she was lifted up to her mamma, who kissed her long and earnestly, and said something about being a good girl, and loving Jesus, which she did not quite recollect ; and then Lewis carried her away, both of them crying bitterly—while the last thing she saw was her mother's hands clasped, and her loving eyes looking after her, with tears running down her face. She never saw her mother again ; but she had a black frock on, which she did not like, and they told her it was because her mamma was dead. Then she inquired what "dying" meant ; and Aunt Lydia, who had then arrived at the hall, said, "It meant being carried and laid in the vault in the church, but that her mother's soul had gone to heaven." Clara neither knew what a vault nor a soul meant, and Aunt Lydia refused to enter into further particulars, telling her she could not understand now. "Then where is heaven, aunt?" "Above the sky." "But how could mamma go there? Oh! why did she leave me!" and she cried bitterly. Her aunt told her not to cry, for her mamma was much happier there, and she was to be a good girl, and go to sleep. And she would answer no more questions, adding in a low voice to the nurse, that if Miss Clara asked any more questions, she was not to answer them, as it only tended to excite her imagination, and do her harm. Then she was taken away to the sea-side for many weeks, with Lewis ; and when she returned, it seemed as if her mamma was forgotten, and her papa was gone away—and there was only Aunt Lydia, and a lady who

was to teach her, who looked at her very gravely, and sat so very upright, and looked so stiff, that the poor child's heart sank within her. This might have been a turning-point in the little child's life. Had her griefs been sympathised with, and difficulties explained to her, how different might her life have been ! How mistaken are those who imagine that children cannot understand death, and heaven or hell, and who suppose that, in leaving these things unexplained, they are keeping their minds free from distressing thoughts ! How might Clara have been led at once to see that God had thought fit to remove her mother from her to a better world, where she was free from pain or sorrow, instead of leaving her for many years (while yet a child) to think it *hard her mother should have left her*, and that it was unkind of Him who doeth all things well to have taken her away !

After Lady Howard died, no one came through the white gate any more ; and, as was before mentioned, Aunt Lydia never permitted her niece to pass through it. Yet how dear ever seemed the remembrance of the old clergyman coming to her, because he had loved her mother ! She often wanted to see him again to ask him more, but the opportunity did not occur. She never saw him except when, some years after, her aunt took her to church with her ; then she used to sit and watch him, and wonder what he meant by her " Father in heaven ;" but often when she knelt down, she would forget all about it, and build houses with the books, or repeat the next day's lessons to herself, to see if she remembered them. " And I have not yet learnt to know my Father in heaven !" she exclaimed aloud, in the earnestness of the moment. " But



where is He? Oh that I could find Him! He would give me rest." A gentle knock at the door (for she had returned to the house) interrupted her meditations, and Mrs Wilson, the housekeeper, entered.

"Oh! ma'am, you surely have not been exposing yourself to the night-air without a shawl! You will catch cold; indeed, ma'am, I fear you will!" she said, seeing her young mistress standing near the open door.

"No fear, Wilson, thank you. I came in the instant I felt it cold."

She then, after speaking a few words to Mrs Wilson, retired to rest, wearied with the excitement of her journey, and the remembrances her return had called forth; and she woke not until Lewis called her next morning, and she saw the sun pouring his beams into her room. Then came the delightful consciousness that she was at home at last; and springing from her bed, she hastened to dress, that she might sooner have the delight of wandering about the house and grounds. As soon as breakfast was over, and various little matters attended to, she flew to her own room, from which she anticipated so much pleasure. The furniture surpassed her utmost expectations—she had taken such a casual glance the evening before. There was a beautiful harp, and a new rosewood piano; and Clara almost sighed as she looked at the harp, it was so long since she had played. She feared she had almost forgotten now; but at least desiring to try, she ran her fingers over its strings, and was astonished at the tones she drew forth. She found she had lost none of the elasticity of touch she used to possess, and for some time she amused herself thus; then recollecting all she had

yet to see, she put it aside, determining to practise. When she had arranged some of the many beautiful ornaments she had brought with her from abroad in the room, she opened a little door which led into a small ante-room in one of the towers, and where her toys used to be kept when a little girl. Her amazement was very great to see the alteration it had undergone. Instead of the little, bare, uncarpeted place it once was, it was fitted up with bookshelves, filled with many standard books, as well as several of the most fashionable publications of the day. It was lighted by two small windows of painted glass, the various colours of which threw a softened light into the apartment that was very pleasant.

"Dear papa, how kind! What a sanctum! How happy I ought to be!" she exclaimed; but the words again seemed to recall painful feelings, and an anxious expression again appeared on her sweet face.

"Why am I not happy? Why am I restless—weary of everything?" and, sitting down on the little ottoman, she burst into tears—most in vexation with herself at what appeared to her unthankfulness for all her blessings. She saw no real cause for misery, and therefore concluded it was her own wayward heart. She knew not then that it was the still small voice of God speaking to her conscience, first making her see the vanity of the world, and then convincing her of sin, and her need of some one on whom to lean. Hastily dashing away her tears, she began busily to re-arrange and examine her books; and when this was finished, finding it still wanted half-an-hour to luncheon—the hour of her father's appearance down-stairs—she put on her walking-dress, passed from the room, through the



garden, by the little white
 into the fields. Here it
 before her, with the path
 almost buried in the snow.
 paused, leant on the stile
 road, just opposite the
 How long she remained
 not; but the sound of
 and, raising her eyes
 towards her. By his
 man; but not having
 hardly have bowed.
 recognition he gave
 her eyes, met such
 smile, that all her
 years of age, rather
 some, but possessed
 and a manner as
 quite as much as
 had been accustomed
 so lately moved.
 posture of manner
 earnest and per-
 prised. He was
 conversation, he
 "How is Sir
 pay my respects
 well," Mr

slept very well during the night, and was now resting comfortably ; so I shall not see him until luncheon."

"Then I shall only intrude upon him to-day. I can come to-morrow. I had only wished to take the first opportunity of expressing my gratitude to him for his kindness."

"I am quite sure papa will be sorry if you were not to see him to-day. Pray, do not let me prevent you—it is quite his time for seeing visitors," said Clara, kindly.

"Thank you. I shall be very happy, then, to do so."

"You will find this the nearest way," said Clara, perceiving the footpath was unknown to him.

"Oh, I was not aware of it. But I suppose it is private?"

"Yes it is, to all but our friends; and I am sure you will find it much pleasanter than the road."


"Indeed I shall be very glad to avail myself of it, if you will give me leave to do so."

"Certainly, if you will promise me not to be a trespasser," said Clara, playfully, as she pointed to the board which threatened all trespassers should "be prosecuted."

Mr Langford smiled. "I will endeavour to be very prudent," he said. And they walked on together.

"How do you like Wilmington?" asked Miss Howard.

"Very much indeed—the place is lovely, and the people kind, homely, good sort of persons in their way. Mr Gray wrote to me when he was taken ill, to tell me how much interest he felt in them all, but that he feared there had been a falling away; and if I should obtain the incumbency, he wished to point out to me many things he felt he had been deficient in—hoping such information



might be serviceable to me. He was an excellent old man, and I feel my great endeavour must be to do as he did ; but latterly he had been so feeble, he was not able to attend to the parish as he wished, and, in consequence, those who had no real religion left off attending public worship and other duties, which must always be the case when no fixed principle of love to God exists."

A deep blush overspread Clara's face while she replied—"And do you think it always necessary for those who are religious to attend church?"

Mr Langford looked pained and surprised. "Surely, ma'am, we ought to meet together for prayer and praise. Our blessed Lord has himself commanded us to do so in the Bible. Those who from illness, or some unavoidable necessity, are prevented, I know, will be excused, but not otherwise."

"But should we keep Sunday so strictly, and go to church, if we feel no pleasure in doing so?" Clara inquired, timidly.

Still more surprised, Mr Langford replied, gently—"Has Miss Howard never read in her Bible, what the prophet Isaiah says about the Sabbath?"

"No, never," was said in a low, mournful voice.

Mr Langford took from his pocket a small copy of the Scriptures, and turning to the passage, read—"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the Sabbath a *delight*, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words : then (*when* we find a pleasure in doing so) shalt thou delight thyself in the

Lord ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' Now, after reading this passage, can you any longer doubt that you ought to spend Sunday as a holy day ? Excuse me, if I take what may seem a liberty in speaking plainly to you ; but as a faithful minister of my heavenly Master, I dare not see you in error, and not lay before you wherein I think you are wrong ; and I must tell you, that unless you can feel this holy day a delight, and love all God's ordinances, I fear, I greatly fear, there is a lack of true love to the gracious Saviour, for whose sake you ought to do all these things."

The long, dark eye-lashes had drooped, and tears fell thick and fast, ere the pastor paused. And he waited in vain for a reply. She felt her voice failed her ; but encouraged by her look, he proceeded to read again of blessings promised to those who keep the Sabbath—even a name better than that of sons and daughters, to the sons of the stranger : To "every one that keepeth the Sabbath, from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant ; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer : their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar : for my house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." "Now, Miss Howard," he continued, in the same gentle voice, "these promises, of course, were made at the time when burnt-offerings were used as types of that one perfect and sufficient Sacrifice which was made upon the cross for sinners. The Jewish ritual was tedious ; and there was much more to be done in their


worship then in ours. Now, we have only to come before God with the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit, which, through Christ, God will graciously accept. How many more privileges have we, who live under the gospel dispensation, than had the Jews! Our blessed Master's commands are light and easy; and if we love Him, we shall delight to keep them. And then see how many blessings He has promised us! Is it not gracious to offer them to such sinners as we are?"

A murmured "Yes" from Clara, again encouraged him to proceed.

"And of what is the Sabbath a type? Is it not an emblem of that heavenly rest which remaineth for the people of God? Will not heaven be one continued Sabbath? There *we* shall spend, I trust, a blessed eternity in praising God. And if we do not love those sweet seasons given us on earth, and feel pleasure in them, how can we expect to enjoy an everlasting Sabbath in heaven?" He glanced at Clara, and still saw the tears rolling down her face. She hastily wiped them away, and earnestly entreated him to proceed.

"Forgive me, Miss Howard, for speaking thus openly, when I am a perfect stranger to you. But, believe me, in this, as in all other things, I desire to take the *Bible*, and that alone, for my guide. I don't want you to think of these things because *I* say them; but to search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so or not."

"Oh, indeed, I am very much obliged to you. You are the first person for many, many years who has spoken thus to me. I cannot tell you how grateful I feel to you! What ~~must~~ you think of me, Mr Langford, when I tell you that



for many years I have never seen the Bible ! And when, as a child, I used sometimes to see it, it was then generally to read the genealogies, to perfect me in hard names. Can you wonder, then, how little I know about its beauties ? And with regard to attending church, with the exception of a few times while abroad, I have never been into a place of worship since I left here, now more than five years ago. My dear father's health has been so bad, I did not like to leave him often ; and then I was alone, and had no one who spoke of these things to me ; and I have been like a vessel, tossed to and fro without a pilot. Oh, I should be so glad to be put into the right way !”

Miss Howard's manner was deeply earnest. The intensity of her long pent-up feelings of anxiety made it so ; and the kind look from Mr Langford told her more than words how he sympathised with her.

“ Whenever you will permit me, how gladly will I talk with you ! But one thing, this morning, I cannot leave you without saying ” (as they now approached the garden) : “ You must not for one moment suppose, that keeping the Lord's-day means simply going to church, or any other form. No good works, however many, however great, can save us. It must be the heart that feels and rejoices in doing all for Christ's sake. Let us ever remember, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; if a person once trusts in his own merits, he is undone—*Christ, and Christ alone*, is our Saviour. We must have saving faith in his blood to cleanse us from our sins. I feel I cannot too strongly enforce this point upon you ; for, alas ! there is an error fast gaining ground in our Church, which leads

many astray, by trying to promote their own salvation. 'Tis indeed a sad mistake; for no alms-giving, no penance, no labour, no time can ever wash away their sins, and they can only drag on a miserable existence, or perhaps drown the reproachings of conscience by imagining themselves justified through their own merits. Pride of heart is a great sin before God—it was pride made Satan rebel—pride made our first parents sin—pride is very often at the root of all we do. We cannot bear to confess ourselves sinners, and throw ourselves entirely upon the Redeemer's mercy, believing that he is ever ready and willing to save all who truly turn to him, with full purpose of heart to serve him alone."

Mr Langford paused, for the little white gate was opened, and they had passed into the garden ere they remembered where they were, so interested had each been—the pastor in earnestly desiring to lead so wandering a sheep to the fold of the Good Shepherd; and his companion equally desiring to be brought to Him who alone can soothe the wounded soul, and give true peace.

"I trust I may indeed find the right path," said Clara, in a low voice.

"May you, indeed!" was the heartfelt reply.

And then Clara glided into the house to see if Sir Edward had come down, as Mr Langford preferred remaining in the garden. "Now I shall know how to find my heavenly Father," she thought, as she passed to her father's room. Sir Edward would be down in a few minutes, he said. So when Clara returned, seeing how much Mr Langford seemed to admire the flowers, she asked him if he would like to go over the gardens until her father

was ready. He thanked her, and expressed his pleasure in doing so, and followed Clara to the conservatory. As they passed along, he said, "I had nearly forgotten a message from my sister. She was exceedingly unwell to-day, or would have had the pleasure of calling upon you, but she hopes to do so the first opportunity."

"I shall be delighted to see her, I am sure. I am sorry to hear she is indisposed. I hope the air of Wilmington has not done her harm? We consider it a very pure air here."

"Oh, no fear of country air disagreeing with her. I think the want of it so long has considerably increased her delicacy. A manufacturing town is not the most desirable place for a fragile person. I was very glad to leave on her account, and come to so pleasant a neighbourhood."

"I think M—— is a very dirty, disagreeable place. I remember passing through it once, and I pitied people who had to live in such a tainted atmosphere," said Clara.

"I certainly agree with you, Miss Howard, in not liking the place itself, but I have left many friends there, whom I shall ever remember with pleasure. But the responsibility was very great. Think of eight thousand persons in one parish to visit and look after! I really felt my health must have given way sooner or later, if help was not given me; but I should not have left M—— had it not been for my sister, and in duty to her I believe I did right to leave. She could not have lived there another winter."

Clara's looks shewed her sympathy, though she only bowed in reply, as they had reached the conservatory,

where the mingled odours of the rarest exotics perfumed the air.

"Is your sister fond of flowers?" said Clara.

"Very. Not only to look at them for their beauty, but she has made botany her study. The more we examine flowers, the more, I think, we may learn to see the hand of an Almighty Creator."

"Yes, they are very wonderful," replied Clara, thoughtfully, looking at a tiny flower she held in her hand.

Mr Langford took another from the same plant, and examined it also. "This is very beautiful! How much more perfect than if formed by man! This delicate fringe, these tiny petals, do they not at once proclaim—'The Hand that made us is divine?' Well," he continued, kindly, "if God cares so much for the little flowers around us, is it not comforting to think how much more care He takes of us? You will not remember the passage, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' When examining flowers, that verse always comes into my mind, and serves to shew the littleness of worldly pomp and grandeur, and the imperfection of everything man makes compared with what God has made."

"I never heard the passage before," was Clara's mournful reply, while her colour again rose painfully.

"May I make a request, Miss Howard?" said Mr Langford, in a kind voice.

"Certainly."

"Will you let me beseech you to lose no time in procuring a Bible, and making it a daily study? I can assure

you, I feel deeply what you have told me this morning about your neglect of God's Word. I would gladly do all I can to lead you right, but I feel incompetent to the task ; I so often have to regret my own shortcomings. I dare not undertake, nor can any one, to guide another. In the Bible, there is everything you can require to direct your steps. Oh ! do not delay to read its blessed truths, and strive to induce those around you to read it too."

"I will indeed. No time shall be lost." She hesitated for a moment to confide in a stranger, but overcame her embarrassment, and then added—"I have long felt a want of something, a void—a desire for peace, but I cannot find it in the world. I believe you have found out for me what it is."

It would be impossible to describe the almost heavenly joy that beamed on the face of Mr Langford at this confession, to know that Miss Howard's heart was not in the world as he had feared it might have been, and that she was aware that something was wrong ; and ere he replied, he silently offered up a few words of prayer, that assistance might be given him to answer aright, and to direct her in the narrow way.

"Miss Howard," he said, at length, "I am truly glad that you have seen all was not well. The first step I consider in the right path is, a consciousness of a want of something more substantial to rest upon than what the world can ever afford us. I have been called by Providence to minister to you, and I desire to speak faithfully. I confess I greatly feared your heart would be worldly, and I dreaded having any conversation with you at first. Do you know sometimes I have great difficulty in bringing

myself to speak to any one, I feel so great a sinner. It seems like presumption to address any one ; but feeling that it is my duty to warn and exhort to repentance, I dare not hesitate. I should not be a true follower of the Master whom I desire to serve, were I to leave anything untried by which I may bring wanderers to His fold. Your kindness in listening to me, I must thank you for ; and permit me to add, if any difficulty presents itself in anything in which I can assist you, it will be the greatest possible pleasure to me to do so. I am very glad you will procure a Bible without delay. I doubt not that, in reading it with *fervent* prayer, and earnest desire to serve and please God, you will find that peace for which you have hitherto sighed in vain."

"Thank you. You have, indeed, made me feel happier since you have spoken to me. I will try to follow your advice in all you have requested me," said Clara.

"Not because *I* say you are to do it," said Mr Langford, gently. "I want you to prove for yourself all I say ; and so far as its hall accord with God's Word, may He bless it to you, is my most sincere desire."

Just then, a servant approached to tell them Sir Edward would be happy to see Mr Langford.

"One moment," said Clara. "As Miss Langford is fond of flowers, do you think I should be taking a liberty were I to send her some ? There are some very beautiful ones in the green-house just now, if you think she would like to have some."

Clara noticed the peculiarly sweet smile Mr Langford had, as he thanked her warmly, and then added—"I must apologise to you for not mentioning my sister's name

before—Mrs Neville. She is a widow, and has only resided with me a little time.”

Clara had been gathering some most exquisite flowers into a little basket she had in her hand ; and calling one of the gardeners to her, she directed him where to get some more, and to take them to the parsonage, and then accompanied Mr Langford to the house. She only remained a few minutes in the room, as luncheon was ready, and she had to prepare herself—not, however, before she had heard her father press Mr Langford to stay. He declined, saying he was going that afternoon to a village adjoining Wilmington, and having business in the evening, he had not time to spare. When she returned, he was still there. She found Sir Edward had prevailed upon him to remain, promising they would drive him to Hartwell after luncheon, so that no time should be lost. Clara felt pleased her father seemed to have taken a fancy for the new incumbent, which she hoped might be productive of much good to them both. After they had driven Mr Langford to Hartwell, Sir Edward expressed his approbation in unusually warm terms to Clara, saying he considered Mr Langford a most suitable clergyman—he seemed earnest and faithful, and adding—“ I do like to see a man zealous in his work.”

How strange it is that many people can admire any one they see earnest in what they are about, without having the least desire to imitate their example !

CHAPTER. VII.

"Peace has unveil'd her smiling face,
And woo's thy soul to her embrace ;
Enjoy'd with ease, if thou refrain
From earthly love, else sought in vain.
She dwells with all who truth prefer,
But seeks not them who seek not her.

"Yield to the Lord, with simple heart,
All that thou hast, and all thou art ;
Renounce all strength but strength divine,
And peace shall be for ever thine.
Behold the paths the saints have trod,
The paths that lead them home to God."

MADAME GUION.

SEATED in the pretty little drawing-room of Wilmington parsonage, on the evening of the day Clara had seen and conversed with Mr Langford, was a lady who might have numbered thirty years, though the youthfulness of her countenance and figure did not make her appear so much. She was tall, extremely slender, and fragile-looking, with a calm, sweet, almost child-like face, with soft wavy brown hair, upon which the sun just then threw a golden shade, where it was not concealed by the widow's sombre cap. The peculiarly deep mourning she wore, perhaps added to the melancholy expression of a face on which sorrow had pressed heavily but one short year before. She was busied

in preparing some articles of clothing for a distressed person in the village, when Mr Langford entered.

"Well, my dear Emily, how are you this evening? Better, I hope?"

"Much better, Henry, thank you. Now, I daresay, you will like some tea; and then I hope you will give me an account of this morning's proceedings, as I feel so much interested," said Mrs Neville, putting away her work.

"Yes, tea will be very welcome, though I am not so much fatigued as I should have been had I walked to Hartwell."

"Not walked! How did you go, then?"

"Sir Edward Howard kindly offered to drive me; which kindness I was very glad to accept, it is so long a walk. But, in the first place, after I left you, I went, as proposed, to the Hall. When on my way there, I met Miss Howard, and returned with her."

"Oh, you have not observed the lovely flowers she sent me this morning; how kind of her to think of them! Well, what is your opinion of her, Henry?"

"My opinion of her," said Mr Langford, in a musing kind of way. "I can hardly describe to you what I think of her: a more pleasing, interesting young lady I never met with. And as to personal appearance, you know how seldom I ever notice that; but Miss Howard is so very lovely, I could not help observing it: a sweeter countenance I never saw. Oh, it is a pity she should have been so much neglected!"

"In what way, Henry? You surprise me."

"I do not mean in general education, of course; but

she is as ignorant as a child in spiritual things. It is very sad. A Bible she confesses she has never seen for years, and ——”

“Oh, Henry, how shocking! Did you tell her how wrong it was?” said Mrs Neville, her soft hazel eyes filling with tears.

“I spoke very sincerely to her, as I felt it my duty to do, and the humility with which she listened was beautiful. She seems as teachable as a child, and willing to learn from any one who will teach her what she should do. She owned, though evidently with great embarrassment, her want of something; and her sincerity in speaking of herself is very cheering. She is very promising, and, with God’s blessing, I trust she will not long remain in the state in which she now is. You know, dear Emily, how reluctant I feel to enter on these subjects with a stranger, and more especially with one like Miss Howard; but the attention and gratitude I met with, more than recompensed me for the small sacrifice of my reserve. You know how often I have been repulsed when I have tried to lead the conversation to better things. To-day, it was far different: Miss Howard gave me encouragement in a manner I had never anticipated. I do indeed desire to thank God for his goodness in making the way so plain before me.”

The thin white hand of Emily Neville was laid upon her brother’s shoulder, while a tear found its way down her pale cheek as she said—“Let us remember, dear Henry, how much effectual fervent prayer avails.”

“I know it, Emily; we will both make this a subject of sincere prayer. And I must also tell you how much I think it is in your power to do good to Miss Howard.

You are a woman, and woman will confide in woman. You will have many more opportunities of conversing with her than I shall, and I think it much better it should be so ; and who knows but that you may be the blessed instrument to point out to her a Saviour crucified for her, and who is ever willing to receive all who come to him ? Will you try to lead her aright, dear Emily ? ”

“ Yes ; I will do my best. And I think where our heart is in our work, we shall have more chance of succeeding.”

“ No doubt of it,” said Mr Langford, gently imprinting a fond kiss upon his sister’s forehead ; while the entrance of the servant with tea prevented any further conversation at that time.

* * * * *

“ Another fine day—how glad I am ! ” thought Clara, next morning, as, hastily dressing, she descended to the breakfast-room. Having first seen her father, and ascertained he would not be down until noon, she told him she wanted the carriage, and should not return till luncheon—playfully adding, her expedition was a secret at present, which he must not inquire into. Sir Edward knew well Clara never gave way to whims of any kind, and therefore owned to a little curiosity as to her setting out to a neighbouring town, eight miles from Wilmington. Her intention to do so was all the information she would give him, promising some time to make a full confession. Hastily finishing her breakfast, having ordered the carriage, she flew up-stairs to prepare for her drive. Punctual to a moment, the carriage was at the door—the splendid gray horses as impatient to be off as their young mistress.

Presently the door was closed, and waving her hand to her father, who was standing at his dressing-room window, she threw herself back, and was left to her own thoughts. These were not the most pleasant. Mr Langford's conversation the day before had at once convinced her of her own sinfulness, and the deep conviction of her own shortcomings pressed heavily upon her mind. In intense agony, when she retired to her own chamber she had wept long ; and, in broken and imperfect sentences, she had tried to pray—but it was but a faint attempt. She did not fully comprehend that Christ will hear all, however vile, who come unto him for pardon. She felt too sinful to approach a holy God ; and, like the publican, she could but pray that He would be merciful to her, and forgive the sins which she felt she had committed against Him—not daring to hope He would yet hear her ; but she did not forget to ask in the name and for the sake of Jesus ; and on rising from her knees, she felt more calmly happy than she had done before. She had found out what was wanting, and she hoped soon to know the way by which she might come to God, and find rest through the Saviour. She was now again so deeply in thought, that not until the clattering of the horses' feet on the pavement of Newington aroused her, was she aware how long she had been meditating. She pulled the check-string, and the footman came for orders.

“ Tell Simpson to drive to Ellis's, the stationer's, in Queen Street.”

The horses' heads were instantly turned into the principal street, and the desired place was soon reached. The footman opened the door, and Miss Howard alighted.

The horses were covered with foam ; the coachman, seeing his young mistress seemed in haste, had driven rapidly.

" Poor things ! " said Clara. " Take the horses to the hotel for half-an-hour, and return here again in that time for me."

Then she entered the shop. Here, Bibles of all sizes and bindings were to be seen. Clara looked at some of almost every description, and was a long time before she had made up her mind which to have. She remembered, if it were advisable for herself to read the Bible, it must also be so for her servants. She, therefore, selected suitable ones for them, intending to present them when a convenient opportunity occurred for doing so. Three handsomely-bound ones she also took for herself, her father, and Kate Hamilton, for whose welfare she felt so kindly an interest. The half-hour seemed very short, so deeply had she been engaged ; but she entered the carriage with a lighter heart than she had had before. Hastily she opened the precious volume, and her eye fell on the words, " Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." " This is just what I want," she said, as she began to read the whole of the fifty-first psalm to herself. " How blind I have been ! It seems written on purpose for me. Oh, why did I never think of this before ! I wonder it never occurred to me to read the Bible ; but still how should I have thought of it ? Aunt Lydia used to make me read it for a lesson, and I never thought of the truths it contains. Shall I be forgiven for all this negligence ? " Such were the thoughts which passed through her mind. Musing thus, and reading a little now and then, the time seemed short which was spent on the

road home. Beech-hall was reached in time for luncheon, which Clara was very glad of, as Sir Edward expected some of the neighbouring families might call, and he did not wish his daughter to be from home. How pleased Clara felt when she opened her parcels, and beheld the large pile of books; but callers soon interrupted her, and she was obliged to leave them. A baronet, his lady, and daughter, were waiting to see her. While entertaining the ladies, Sir Edward being deeply engaged in conversation with the gentleman, Mrs Neville was announced, and afterwards followed other visitors, so that Clara's time was so much occupied she was not able to speak more than a few words to Mrs Neville; but, in parting, she expressed a hope she should soon have the pleasure of seeing her again, for there was something in her calm gentle manner so pleasant and sympathising, that she felt drawn to desire her friendship.

The next day was Sunday, and Clara rose early, determining to attend the morning service. As she leaned out of her window, the village bells began to ring, sounding so sweetly through the summer air. Clara had chosen this room for her own, because from it she could see the ivy-covered tower of the church, beneath whose hallowed roof her mother's remains now rested in sure and certain hope, she knew, of a joyful resurrection. She was in heaven—this was a blessed thought to her child; but she was almost as ignorant now as when, after her mother's death, she inquired where heaven was. She had no conception of the unspeakable blessedness of being in the presence of her Saviour. She had not yet read those sublime and glorious descriptions of that city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God—whose gates are pearl,

and whose streets gold—a city where there is no need of the sun, for the Lamb is the light thereof—where there is no need of a temple, for God dwells in the presence of his saints, who worship before Him, and see Him as He is—a city where nothing can enter that defileth, or maketh a lie; where neither sin nor sorrow can come; where there is no death, and where all tears shall be for ever wiped from the mourner's eyes. Clara knew not all this, or there would have been no lingering feeling of regret for her “who was not lost, but only gone before,” and with the eye of faith she could have seen her glorified mother, happy to be ever with the Lord.

“Perhaps,” thought Clara, “my mother's eye is on me now—she looks down with pity when she sees how far her child has wandered. Oh! I must try to do what is right, that I may be fitted to join her in that better country, whither I hope to follow her when I die.”

The thought of death is often accompanied with dread, even to those Christians who are fully prepared; and to the young, more especially, there is something so terrific in passing through the dark valley, that they shudder at the thought. This is but natural; and a feeling of this sort is frequently met with in the most experienced believers. No wonder Clara, who felt herself unprepared to die, should tremble in thus recalling the parting scene which had been impressed upon her mind when she last saw her mother. Hastily she withdrew from the window, and went to her father's room. Sir Edward was not yet up; but when Clara begged admittance for a few moments, it was willingly granted. “How are you, dear papa?”

“Pretty well, darling; but for what,” he added, play-

fully, "am I indebted for the honour of this visit? You don't often favour me so early."

Clara smiled. "I only come when I have favours to ask, I think; but I hope I have not disturbed you?"

"Not the least. What has my Clara to ask now? Not going to Newington mysteriously again, eh?"

"Oh, no, not that indeed."

"Well, give me a kiss; and whatever it is, it may be granted."

Clara complied; and then, while she blushed deeply, she added—"May I go to church, papa?"

"To church! Bless me, what a request! What on earth could induce you to ask such a question? Of course, if you want a little variety, by all means, my dear."

"Thanks, thanks, many times."

"But what could put such an idea into your head?"

"Because—because—I think it seems right. Why, I can tell you better afterwards; and I wanted to beg your permission—for you have never asked me to go, and I did not know what objection you might have," she said, hesitatingly.

"Oh, why, as to that, certainly I should never *ask* you to go. I don't want you to be a Methodist; but if it is any pleasure to you, why, by all means go. When we were in London or abroad, it was not of much consequence, but here it might look singular. The people in the village would find it a bad example for them, if no one from the Hall went."

"But don't you think it right to go, papa? Mr Langford——"

"Oh! he has been putting it into your head, has he?"

Well, perhaps it may be. If I were well enough, I might feel it *my* duty to go now and then ; but circumstances alter cases. However, by all means, if you feel it right, go."

"Thank you, papa. I do feel I ought to attend. So good morning for the present, or I shall be too late."

Clara found it very formidable to be ushered all alone into the great curtained pew of the Howards, and to meet the gaze of the whole congregation, whose inquisitive glances could not be restrained, anxious as they were to see the young lady from the Hall. But soon the calm clear voice of Mr Langford fell like music upon her ear, as he pronounced those touching words—"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Through the whole of the exhortation, she followed him attentively ; but when she knelt down and repeated the confession, how peculiarly adapted did it seem to her circumstances ! She felt she had indeed erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep, and it was with a truly penitent heart she lifted up her soul to God, and prayed she might be forgiven. How beautiful did all the services of the Church seem to her ! The Litany, how it seems so thoroughly to teach us to pray for all men ! None are left out. It was a soothing thought. How often she had been prayed for, including herself among those "who have erred, and are deceived," and those "who *profess* and call themselves Christians." She felt how long she had called herself by that name, without having anything of the true spirit of such.

When Mr Langford ascended the pulpit and gave out

his text, it seemed as if he had really known what her thoughts had been. It was taken from Isaiah lxiii. 16—"Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not : thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; thy name is from everlasting." With deep attention, Clara listened as he spoke of our adoption through grace, and simply explained the work of redemption by Christ—pointing out that they who come unto Jesus, looking unto him as the author and finisher of faith, and trust only in his merits for pardon and mercy, shall receive that spirit of adoption, whereby they can truly call God their Father. "Our God," said he, "is a consuming fire. If we trust to any merit of our own, then must the terrors of the law overwhelm us. Simple trust in Christ is all we want ; nothing but his blood can wash away sin ; and when thus made pure from all sin, and arrayed in the robe of Christ's righteousness, God will receive us graciously, and love us freely. Let us then," he concluded, "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." (Heb. iv. 16).

The sermon was short, but so clear that a little child might have understood it ; and ere Clara rose from her knees, at the conclusion of the service, she had prayed to be admitted among the number of God's children, *through Jesus Christ*.

Sir Edward was down-stairs when she returned, with a new novel in his hand.

"Really, Clara, I am very glad to have you back again—this book is so stupid. And do you know, that tiresome

old man, Mr Gray, got up a petition some time ago to have no Sunday delivery of letters ; so here am I without the papers—and I cannot get them, either, without sending to Newington for them, which seems hardly worth while ; but I must find some way of getting them another time.”

“Oh, do not, please, papa ! Indeed, I will try to make myself so agreeable on a Sunday, you shall never miss them.”

“Come, then, begin, pussey, for I am overpowered with ennui this morning. What have you seen ? Have you been pleased ? What sort of a sermon had you ? How do you like Mr Langford’s style ?”

“I have seen and heard a great deal, papa.” And then she proceeded to relate what had most pleased her, without dwelling much at this time upon her own convictions of sin, knowing but too well how such an announcement would startle her father, and make him fancy she was only making herself melancholy. Sir Edward listened with interest, because she was his child, but feeling no sympathy with her pleasure. With him, the freshness of hearing had passed away—his feelings had grown hard to touch. With Clara, it was far different ; the buds of promise already began to unfold. The Holy Spirit, like rain upon the tender flowers, was beginning to be felt in her soul, opening it more and more to the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness. When she had concluded, her father stroked back her hair from her face, and expressed his pleasure that she had enjoyed her morning—adding, if she really liked it so much, he would never hinder her from going.

Clara’s eyes beamed with joy. “And will you not

go with me, too, sometimes, papa, when you are well enough?"

Sir Edward hesitated.

"Well, perhaps—I do not know." But seeing the disappointed expression on her face, he added, "When I feel able, Clara, I shall be glad to oblige you, if you wish it."

This was as much as Clara had expected, and she thanked her father warmly—adding no more on the subject, lest he should grow weary of it.

There was no service in the afternoon—Mr Langford went to Hartwell to preach. So, after luncheon, Clara took her Bible and went into the garden to read, where she was soon joined by Sir Edward.

"What are you reading, my dear?"

"The Bible, papa."

"You are becoming very religious, I think."

"You are not angry with me, I hope? I like it so much."

"No, please yourself in your own way; if people can find pleasure in such things, why should I hinder them?"

"You would like it too, dear papa. Let me read a little to you—do," she said, coaxingly.

"Yes, if you like."

Clara immediately commenced. She was reading the history of Abraham. When she came to the part where he is commanded to offer up his son, Sir Edward seemed much interested, and laying his hand on her arm, he looked affectionately into her face, and said—"Ah, there was faith indeed! I could never have sacrificed you, my Clara—never!"

Clara laid her soft cheek on her father's hand, and said—
“Yes, papa, you would, if God said you must. I am sure faith would be given for the trial.”

“It might, my child ; but God forbid the task of submitting should ever be given me ! It is too hard to think of.”

“But, dear papa, all we have is God's ; He only lends it, and surely He has a right to claim it again.”

“Yes, yes ! but I cannot think of it.”

“There is the dinner-bell !” exclaimed Clara, feeling it a relief, such a choking sensation came into her throat as she thought if her father should ever be taken away from her, how could *she* bear it ; and she glanced at his pale face and thin figure, and remembered how she had once seen him as a child. He was so handsome—and she remembered to have heard how merry and active he used to be ; now he was a mere wreck, and sorrow had brought it all on. Her mother's death had laid the foundation of a delicacy which now could never be overcome.

Again the church-bells are ringing, and Sir Edward, seeing Clara would like to attend in the evening, made no remonstrance ; and happy in his permission, Clara again prepared for service. The sermon, this evening, was even more beautiful than the morning ; it was from John xv. 14—“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” The clergyman spoke of the delightful prospect of having Jesus for a friend ; how easy it was to follow him, for his commandments are not grievous. Clara felt a sweet hope of rest and peace steal over her—of days yet in store for her—of happiness in the unfailing Friend of

sinners. The dismissing hymn, sung chiefly by the Sunday-school scholars, and the fine tones of the organ, subdued to render the voices of the singers distinct, seemed to Clara sweeter music than she had ever yet heard. She returned home, more than ever resolved to come without delay to Christ—casting all her sins upon him, trusting to his almighty power alone to save her.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Oh, how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan !
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile !
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal, from afar
Conspicuous, as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—Believe, and live."

COWPER.

ON Tuesday, Mr Langford and Mrs Neville were to join the Howards at dinner, Sir Edward being anxious to shew them every possible attention and kindness. When Clara and Mrs Neville retired to the drawing-room, after a little conversation Clara asked Mrs Neville if she was fond of music, advancing at the same time to the piano, and opening it.

"I am very fond of it ; please, do play or sing something," said Mrs Neville.

"I should be very glad to do so ; but I have had so little time lately for practising, I really am not able to play. I hope by and by, when we are a little more settled here, I shall have leisure for music. I hope you will favour me with something."

"I play very little now myself; but my brother is so fond of it, on his account I do not like to give it up," Mrs Neville replied, seating herself at the piano. She then played a few airs with taste, remarking on the fine tone of the instrument.

"Oh! do sing me something," said Clara, when Mrs Neville rose to return to her seat.

"I only sing sacred music."

"Oh! I should like to hear something more than ever," said Clara.

Mrs Neville, ever ready to oblige, immediately re-seated herself, and sang the following beautiful words, in a remarkably clear, sweet voice :—

"Oh! had I the wings of a dove, I would fly
Away from this world of care;
My soul would mount to the realms on high,
And seek for a refuge there.

"But is there no haven here on earth,
No place for the wearied breast,
No favour'd spot where content has birth,
In which I may find a rest?

"There is, there is in Thy holy Word,
That Word which can ne'er depart,
There is a promise of mercy stored
For the lowly and meek of heart.

"My yoke is easy, My burden light,
Then come unto Me for rest—
These, these are the words of mercy stored
For the wounded and wearied breast.

"Oh! is it not written, 'Believe, and live?'
The heart, by bright hope allured,
Shall find the comfort these words can give,
And be by its faith assured.

"Then why should we feel the world's cold frown,
When truth to the heart is given—
The light of religion, to guide us on,
In joy, to the paths of heaven?"

The music was well adapted to the words—a soft soothing melody; and the clearness with which Mrs Neville pronounced all the words, so that Clara might hear them, brought a feeling of joy to her heart as she leant forward to catch those gracious words of invitation from the Saviour. The two at that moment might have formed a beautiful picture. Clara, in her snowy white dress, with hardly any ornament save that of a meek and quiet spirit written on her placid brow, those deep-blue eyes riveted on the singer, lips slightly apart, drinking in, as it were, all that fell from her of those heavenly truths which hitherto it had been so little her happy lot to hear; while the mild face of the young widow, in her deep mourning, singing so sweetly, and feeling all so deeply, as she realised that heavenly rest into which, but one short year before, her husband had entered, formed a striking contrast to her young companion. In one thing only was Mrs Neville superior to Clara—she *had* found that pearl of great price, which, in the sight of God, is of more value than all the world can give. In intellect, wealth, talent, beauty, and rank, she was far beneath her; but what availed all this, when Christ has said he has prepared some better things for those who "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?" Not only shall all earthly wants be supplied, but mansions are made ready in his Father's house, a treasure which shall never fail in heaven, where those who have loved him here on earth shall be made kings

and priests unto God. Oh ! "surely it shall be well with them that fear God" (Eccles. viii. 12). They shall never know what it is to mourn in secret over disappointed hopes ; their affections are set on things above, and not on things on the earth ; they have a peace and joy in believing which no worldly person can have ; they have a "Friend who sticketh closer than a brother," a heavenly Father. Christians need never be otherwise than happy—for when their sins weigh heavily upon their minds, they know where to lay the burden ; when trials come, they have a sure support. So it was with Mrs Neville. Trouble had passed heavily over her head ; but she was happy, because she knew where to apply for consolation. Clara had been unhappy without knowing why, and knew not to whom to look for a long time, until directed by her minister. How gladly did she listen to anything that could assist her in finding peace !

"Is it really written, 'Believe, and live'—'My yoke is easy, My burden light'?" she asked, when Mrs Neville had finished.

"Yes, indeed it is. The words are, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ;' and Christ's own words, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest : take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.'"

"Oh ! where is it written ? Please find me the place," said Clara, earnestly, as she took her Bible from an ottoman.

"Willingly," said Mrs Neville, taking it from her hands, and turning over the leaves of the New Testament.

"Oh, I have not read so far as that yet," said Clara. "I began at Genesis, as I thought it would be best—is it not?"

"I think perhaps not. It would be more beneficial were you to begin with the Gospels, and go through the whole of the New Testament before you commence the Old. It is there we read of our blessed Lord's earthly mission. You will then be able to understand the work of redemption sooner."

"I will do so certainly. Thank you for telling me this; for, indeed, I know so little about these things, I sadly want some one to direct me."

"Oh! if you knew what a pleasure it is to me to shew you anything, or to be of service to you in any way!" said Mrs Neville, gently.

"Thank you very much for all your kindness. Will you promise me you will shew me all I ought to do? I do so wish to do right," said Clara.

Mrs Neville could not resist taking her hand, and, pressing it kindly, said—"I believe you, Miss Howard; but take the Bible for your guide, and you cannot err. You must not trust to me or any one to lead you right. I shall be glad if you would consider me as your friend; and if in any difficulty I can serve you, I shall indeed be happy."

"Oh! if you would, I should be so glad. If you knew how long I have wanted a friend—how many years I have wished to have one—you would then be able to realise my feelings," Clara exclaimed. All her reserve had vanished. She felt she really had found a sympathising friend at last—one who would teach her what was right, and who could so well understand those hidden feelings of her heart which

hitherto no one had comprehended. Taking her seat by Mrs Neville, she enjoyed a most delightful conversation with her, such as it had never been her happiness to have before. Mrs Neville so fully realised the earnest longings Clara had experienced, and explained to her how it was the Holy Spirit striving within her, convincing her of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come—startling her to the conviction of the hollowness of the world and all in it, and weaning her heart from all fading pleasures.

“I used to think exactly as you do,” she said, when Clara had finished telling her all her hopes and fears. “Until I was sixteen or seventeen years of age, I was very careless about religion. I had been brought up by an aunt, a very worldly-minded woman, but who was very kind to me. I saw very little of my brother up to this time; and then, my aunt dying, I returned to live with my mother and Henry, who had then been ordained some years. I soon saw he was very uncomfortable at observing the way in which I spent my time. I literally did nothing, with the exception of a little embroidery, or reading novels. He was very kind, and gently tried to lead me to better things. I remember one morning particularly his coming into the drawing-room and finding me in tears. On inquiring the cause, he found I was weeping over the fate of an imaginary heroine, who had put an end to her life in a fit of despair. Never shall I forget the look of sorrow on my brother’s face. He seriously remonstrated with me on my sin in exciting my feelings over the sorrows of people who never existed, and yet never shedding one tear over the real distress that surrounded us. I told him I knew of none. ‘Because you never see it, Emily,’

he said, kindly. 'If you would but try to do some good in the world, instead of idling away your precious time, you might soon find out some to pity much more than the heroines you meet with in these silly books.' 'But how can *I* do any good? *I* am not a clergyman—*I* am not old enough. How could *I* make people religious?' I inquired, incredulously. 'Emily,' he said, 'I will tell you a fable that may perhaps do you good. A drop in the ocean once said to itself (exactly what you have been saying to me), "Of what use am I in this mighty deep?—I am so small and insignificant!" While thus lamenting its condition, an oyster opened, and the drop was presently inside it. After a time, it became a beautiful pearl; and at length was found, and considered so rare a gem, that it was placed in the crown of the Emperor of Russia. Thus you see, Emily, small and insignificant as it seemed, it became most valuable. You say right when you tell me you are young, and that you cannot do much; but still you may do something. For instance, you need not waste the precious time God has given you in the frivolous way you are now doing. Remember we must give an account of how we have spent our life; and it is so short, that every moment is of consequence. Do let me beg of you to think seriously of these things. Will you not try to do something for Christ, who has laid down his life for you?' When Henry finished, I remembered feeling very uncomfortable, but I tried to laugh it off. However, I was very unhappy, and I could not tell what made me so; but still I would not make up my mind to give myself up to Christ. I had been long promised a visit to some gay friends in London, and I could not bear to forego

my pleasure. So I went, much to Henry's regret ; but he told me, at parting, he trusted I should soon see there was no real enjoyment in worldly amusements. And so I found it ; and wearied and sickened, I returned home, longing to find something to make me happy. For months I was in this way ; and oh, the untiring patience of my mother and Henry to lead me right ! At length, light dawned upon me. I saw myself as I was—a wretched, miserable sinner. I trust I sincerely repented. I have since found my Saviour precious to me. Oh, how precious ! He has been with me in the waters and in the fires. I have had severe trials, and sometimes my faith has been weak, and I should have sunk under them ; but Christ has been my support, and I can rejoice now in those very afflictions which at the time I felt so hard to bear." Mrs Neville ceased. The tears were in the eyes of both ; but the silent pressure of the hand was all that passed between them—for Sir Edward and Mr Langford immediately joined them, and then they went out into the garden, Mr Langford walking by Clara's side, while Sir Edward took Mrs Neville to look at some new plants which he was desirous she should see.

There was a slight pause ; and then Clara, blushing timidly, said—" If there is any way in which I could relieve the poor people, would you kindly tell me ? I should be so glad to do something for them."

Certainly Mr Langford's countenance was expressive of extreme benevolence, and Clara felt it so as he replied—" I thank you, Miss Howard. You have it, indeed, very greatly in your power to do much for the good of those around you ; but, as regards temporal wants, just at present few are very destitute in Wilmington."

"Then can I do nothing?" asked Clara.

"I could point out many other ways in which you might do good; but"—he hesitated—"perhaps Miss Howard might think them beneath her."

"I don't think I should. Will you tell me what they are?"

"There are three or four very old infirm women, almost blind, who would at any time be very glad to have a chapter in the Bible read to them by any one who would kindly do it; there are others younger, who cannot read at all; then there is teaching in our Sunday-schools, and——"

"Oh, indeed, I am not fit for that—I need so much teaching myself," said Clara.

"I do not think you could do that at present, until you know more of the Word of God. I should not advise it; but would you be willing to do so, should your life be spared, when you know more?"

"Oh yes, indeed I should!"

"Then I have no fear of your soon being competent. It does not require a great deal of worldly knowledge to teach children, but earnestness and patience. It is a most difficult task—one which has often tried me. It must be line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little—the same things repeated many times—and, after all, perhaps you may fail in inducing them to be attentive. It is a work that requires much prayer and faith, for it is not often we are permitted to see the fruit of our labours; but I have faith to believe that the seed sown in the heart of a child will some time or other spring up and bear fruit, the minds of the young are so susceptible to *first* impressions. Things learnt in after life are never so deep as those we receive in infancy. I seem to know and feel

this so well by what my dear mother taught me. I remember sitting on her knee, hearing stories told me of Abraham, Joseph, David, and many others, more especially Samuel. The idea, then, of dedicating myself to God, and being a clergyman, took such possession of my mind that it never left me ; and as soon as I was able, I gave myself to the work. Sunday-schools are of a great deal more importance than many people admit. I wish these things were more thought of than they are."

"I confess," replied Clara, "I have hitherto been more inclined myself to believe that they were places where children were sent by their parents, more for the sake of getting them out of the way than anything else."

"I fear parents but too often *do* think so, or regard it more as a favour to the minister to send their children. However, we must try to instil into their youthful minds something that will convince their parents they are not merely kept quiet, or taught to behave properly."

"I am sure I hope you may succeed," said Clara.

"Might I add one more thing on the subject of doing good, if you will not think me too presuming?" said Mr Langford.

"Certainly. I shall be very glad to hear anything on that subject—I am so very anxious to be useful."

"Thank you. I mean the good you may do by your influence over others. You have been placed in a high and, I may add, responsible position. All around belongs to Sir Edward, and you are his representative, therefore all you do will be marked ; and if your dependants see you careless in religious duties, they will be the same. For instance, with regard to the neglect of the Sabbath, which

you tell me you have never been accustomed to consider wrong, do you not think the people here would be inclined to neglect it also, if they saw an example for doing so in you ?”

“You are quite right, Mr Langford. I quite see all you mean ; but I trust I shall never again be guilty of want of respect for God’s day. I enjoyed the services so much on Sunday, I do not think I should ever desire to be absent from church again.”

“I am truly glad to hear it. May God give you the aid of his Holy Spirit to direct you—for without his assistance, we cannot keep our good resolutions. And oh ! never forget, that when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants—that all we can do is but our duty, and nothing in comparison to the inestimable blessing of a Saviour. Pray, forgive me, if I have taken a liberty in speaking so plainly to you, when I have had so short an acquaintance. I should not feel I had done what was right had I not thus spoken ; but I should not like you to think me presuming. I wish you to see and understand my motives.”

“Indeed I do, and thank you for all you have told me. I hope you will always speak plainly, I am so very ignorant of all I ought to know.”

The conversation here turned on other subjects. They spoke of the continent. Mr Langford had been abroad ; and it was surprising to Clara how much he could enter into all her tastes and feelings—he seemed to know about every place and thing that interested her. His language and ideas were so varied, his descriptions so vivid, Clara was amazed. She had imagined Mr Langford cared to converse on nothing that was not serious. She found it

quite different ; and now learnt for the first time that a Christian can much more enjoy the works of God than any one else. Mr Langford was cheerful, and even brilliant, in recounting some amusing adventures he had met with in Switzerland. They were soon joined by Sir Edward and Mrs Neville, who both entered into the conversation with great interest ; and Clara, ere they returned to the house, admitted to herself that Mr Langford's conversation was even more interesting than Lord Wentworth's. There was a softening and yet an unwitting influence in all he said—unwilling to misjudge others, their defects and failings were treated with the utmost charity. Inanimate objects seemed to have a double interest, as being the work of his heavenly Father ; and even in the works of man, and the daily occurrences of life, he never failed to recognise a divine overruling Hand.

“ Had we not better return to the house, now ? ” said Clara, observing the air was growing chilly for her father.

“ Yes, I think we had,” said Sir Edward. “ Here, Clara, let me put this little rosebud into your hair. Would you believe it, Mrs Neville, this daughter of mine went to her first ball with nothing but some little flowers like this in her hair ? ”

“ And what could be more beautiful, Sir Edward ? ” said Mrs Neville, smiling.

“ No ! I own there is nothing prettier ; but it was the simplicity of the thing that astonished people so much,” replied Sir Edward, laying his hand fondly on his daughter's arm.

“ I had no idea it was so late ! ” said Mrs Neville,

glancing at the timepiece in the drawing-room, as they re-entered.

"Must you really go? I am so sorry!" said Clara.

"Oh yes, thank you. We make a rule never to be out later than this hour."

Clara followed her friend from the room, while she put on her walking things, as she felt how precious were even a few moments longer in her society.

"I hope we shall see much of one another, dear Mrs Neville. I trust you will come and see me very often," she said, as they descended the stairs.

"I shall be only too happy, if you will allow me," was the reply.

As they entered the drawing-room, they heard Sir Edward saying, in a very decided manner, "My dear sir, a perfect delusion!—a chimera! How can any good be the result? What do *you* say, Clara?" (he added, seeing his daughter had entered). "Can missionaries do any good who go out to preach to cannibals?"

"Oh yes, papa; I think a great deal. I could almost envy those holy men, who, regardless of their lives, will go forth to preach to the heathen. I have sometimes thought what a glorious prize must they receive who can thus, from love to Christ, give up all to win souls to him!"

As she spoke, her eye kindled to an unusual brightness, and a beautiful glow overspread her face at the fervour of her speech, blushing still more deeply as she caught a look of admiration from Mrs Neville, and one of gratitude from the clergyman, which shewed how delightful was her sympathy to him.

"My dear enthusiast, I suppose you would go yourself if you could, as Mr Langford has been wishing to do?" said Sir Edward, kindly.

"I should not like it now, papa; but if it were my duty, I hope I could do it," Clara said, timidly.

"Well, well, my dear, no fear of its being your duty to go," said Sir Edward, instantly changing the subject.

Adieux were now exchanged, and Mr Langford and his sister had soon disappeared through the little white gate into the wood.

"Oh, Henry, what a lovely character Miss Howard appears to be!" said Mrs Neville.

"She is the finest natural character I ever met with. And when the Holy Spirit once shines into her heart, I believe she will be as perfect as a mortal can be on earth," Mr Langford added, gravely.

"Has it not been a pleasant evening?"

"Very. I have seldom enjoyed so pleasant a conversation as I have had with Miss Howard."

"And you cannot tell how very kind she was to me before you and Sir Edward joined us! She asked me to be her friend. I do think it very kind of her—because how natural it would have been for her to have thought I was beneath her in station."

"But that would not have been right, Emily. I am quite sure Miss Howard will never have any feeling of that kind—it would not be like her if she had."

CHAPTER IX.

" Ah ! why, by passing clouds oppress'd,
Should vexing thoughts distract my breast ?
Turn, turn to Him in every pain,
Whom never suppliant sought in vain—
Thy strength in joy's extatic day,
Thy hope when joy has pass'd away ! "

BOWDLER.

THE Thursday following was Sir Edward Howard's birthday, and a splendid fête was to be given to the tenantry. There was a dinner at the Hall ; the gardens thrown open to the neighbourhood ; and everything that could contribute to their pleasure was prepared for them. Clara was delighted to find so bright a day ; she would have been as much disappointed as the people had it been otherwise—so great a pleasure was it to her to make others happy. Sir Edward had risen earlier than usual, to be present at the festivities of the day ; and very warm was the embrace, and very fervent were Clara's good wishes, when she entered the breakfast-room, and placed in his hand the splendid Bible she had purchased for him a short time before.

" Many thanks, my darling ! But what made my Clara think of this ? " said he, turning over its pages ; while his hand slightly trembled as the remembrance of how long

he had neglected reading its precious truths, forced itself upon him.

"Did you think I did not possess one?"

"No, papa, I did not think that."

"Well, what then?"

"Because, dear papa, I thought you would value it as my gift ; and then, perhaps, you would read it."

"You judged rightly. We will read it together ; for I see my Clara's heart is bent on making me a convert," Sir Edward said, drawing his daughter closer to him.

"How nice that will be!" said Clara, her eyes sparkling with unwonted lustre. She wondered what had caused this change in her father ; for though he had asked her to read to him on the Sunday, and seemed interested in the Bible for a time, yet she had but too much reason to fear he had only wanted to hear it, in order to pass away the time until the newspapers arrived. But she was not left long in doubt, for her father presently added, that he had had a long conversation with Mr Langford, when he had called at the parsonage the day previous, and that he had earnestly pressed upon him the duty of reading the Scriptures, and also that of family prayers,—
"which you know, Clara, my dear," Sir Edward said, "I have never had in my household. I told Mr Langford it would be quite impossible for me to attend to them myself. If *you* chose, you might do so ; and if he liked, I should be glad for him to come once a-week, and read them in the evening himself."

"It was very kind of you to do so, dear papa! I am sure it would be a very nice thing, if Mr Langford would. Shall we say every Thursday evening? and I will try to

conduct the rest—though I sadly fear it will be very formidable.”

“Oh, no! If you read a portion of Scripture, and a prayer, nothing more, of course, is expected from you.”

“Certainly I will make the effort,” replied Clara.

“I do not know how it is,” said Sir Edward, after a pause. “Mr Langford speaks very plainly to me truths that, from any one else, I should have considered an impertinence; but the manner in which it is done is so very gentlemanly, that it were impossible to feel offended. He never assumes dignity, or magnifies his office. He treats me as a superior, without making any show of doing so. He is a very remarkable man. I must say, if all those who call themselves Christians lived up to their principles as he does, I should desire to join them, and become a Christian myself.”

“But, papa, the principles are the same. I do not think we should judge by the manner in which others live—should we?”

“No, perhaps not exactly, my dear; but when I see men professing one thing and doing another, it makes me very wary how I trust in religion. But come, Clara; we must go, dear. The people are already assembling—we must make ourselves busy among them to-day.”

There are many persons who may be inclined to think a sudden change was wrought in Clara Howard—too sudden to last. In ordinary cases, the mind may perhaps not be capable of laying hold at once upon the promises of God. But Clara’s heart for years had been open to conviction of sin. She had had no opportunities of learning the way of pardon and reconciliation with God,

and we need not be surprised, when an earnest, truthful minister of Christ speaks to her, directing her at once to the Saviour of sinners, she should immediately receive the truth, and embrace with eagerness the hopes of salvation, through his death, so freely offered to all who long for rest. We dare not, however, assert, that because she then began to seek for the pardon of her sins, through faith in the offered Saviour, that peace in all its freshness was at once vouchsafed to her heart. No ! Though Christ has assuredly promised the Comforter, and made abundant provision for the believer's peace, he has often many a hard struggle with remaining unbelief—many a grievous burden to bear of sin—before he ascertains the length and breadth and solidity of the foundation on which his soul's peace is built. Numbers of Christians, throughout the whole of their lives, spend much time in sorrowing that they have not clearer views of Christ, and more realisation of the blessedness of heaven. This mainly arises from a misapprehension of revealed truth ; but through all this, they know that they are seeking aright ; and the thought sheds a calm over their minds which nothing the world could offer would have the blessed effect of producing.

The day was a happy one for all parties. Sir Edward and his daughter endeared themselves much to all their dependents, by the kind interest they felt in them and their children. Ere they separated for the night, Sir Edward addressed a few words to the people ; Mr Langford proposed cheers for their landlord and his daughter ; and then all retired from the festive scene, feeling that a new link had been added to the ties that bound them to their long-absent friends.

"I have had such a pleasant day!" said Clara, as, with Mr Langford and his sister, she walked across the lawn.

"And so have I," added both her companions.

"How delightful it is to give pleasure to others!" said Mr Langford.

"Yes, I feel it a real happiness," replied Clara, as she wished her friends good-night.

A week more passed on, and not a day had occurred in which Clara had neglected the study of the Scriptures, both in her own apartment and with her father, who, though it did not appear to interest him much, seemed glad if it gave his child pleasure. She had seen Mrs Neville, and driven her out twice, and much she enjoyed having such a friend. Mr Langford had been, as proposed, to read prayers on Thursday evening; and the short and simple exposition he gave on the chapter he had read, was fully understood and appreciated by all. Sir Edward was growing more and more fond of him: he found it impossible to resist the earnest persuasions to Christianity of a man whose whole soul was in the work of bringing sinners to Christ. There was never anything commanding in his tone. When speaking, he entreated as a father or brother; and by always striving to live up to what he taught, he much more readily gained an influence over his parishioners.

Clara was sitting one Monday morning in her own little room, thinking deeply. Lord Wentworth was expected in the evening, and she felt a sensation of joy when she remembered he was so soon to be with them. She should hear of Kate and all her London acquaintances from him; and she was pleased at the prospect of again meeting one for whom she felt the highest esteem, and who had made

many an hour pleasant to her by his delightful conversation and fascinating manners.

But there was a shade of sadness pressing upon her brow. The Bible lay open before her. She had evidently paused to think over what she had been reading. She seemed much perplexed, when, to her great delight, on raising her head, she saw Mr Langford just entering the garden. The glass doors were open, and she was sitting near them, so the clergyman at once advanced towards her. Having inquired after Sir Edward, who was not quite so well, he took a seat at Clara's request.

"I am so glad you are come! I have been wanting you to explain some difficulties that have occurred in my reading to-day," said Clara.

Mr Langford took up the Bible. "I shall indeed be glad to explain anything that is in my power," he said, kindly.

"It has made me so unhappy!" Clara said, tears coming into her eyes. "First, I read this verse, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God' (Luke xviii. 24, 25). Now, Mr Langford, what are we that have riches to do? Are we to sell all we have, as Christ told the young ruler in the lesson yesterday, that we may give to the poor?" Clara said, anxiously.

The primary meaning of the passage was easily explained. That the needle's eye was a small gateway, sometimes met with in eastern lands, which is so narrow, every camel going under must stoop down to have its burden taken off, and then, still on its knees, pass beneath it. "Even

so," he continued, earnestly, " must the rich stoop, and become meek and lowly of heart, ere they can pass through the gate of everlasting life. Wealth is frequently a great snare; the pride of worldly possessions often tends to wean the heart from better things, and make the evil inclinations less easy to subdue. I often have told some of my humble friends, when they have been complaining of the hardness of their lot, how mercifully has God been pleased to place them in such a situation, where they have so few temptations to bind them to earth; and thus they are enabled, with greater joy, to look forward to that better country, where the rebuke of God's people shall be taken away, and where sin and sorrow shall cease. And now, with regard to the young ruler, though we are not bound to give up all our wealth, yet we are to be *ready* to do so, should our heavenly Master require it of us (which, without doubt, for our good, He sometimes does, lest our heart should be set too much on earthly pleasures); and until we can feel willing to give up houses, riches, lands, even those nearest and dearest to us, our Lord says we are not worthy to be his disciples. Can you then, dear Miss Howard, say you would be ready to give up all, even were it to be the rending asunder of every earthly tie; or would you, like the young ruler, turn from Him exceeding sorrowful?"

The tears fell slowly down Clara's cheeks as she murmured faintly—"Not yet, I fear; but I will pray for grace to enable me to do so, if it be my Saviour's will."

"That is all that is required. 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' Jesus says; and in every temptation there shall be a way of escape made. This subject reminds me of

some beautiful lines which I have had occasion to repeat often to myself, when I have felt as if clinging too much to anything on earth—

“ ‘ Whatever passes as a cloud between
The mental eye of faith and things unseen,
Causing the brighter world to disappear,
Or seem less lovely, and its hope less dear ;
This is our world, our idol, though it bear
Affection's impress or devotion's air.’ ”

“ They are very beautiful lines,” said Clara. “ Would you give me a copy of them ? ”

“ Certainly, I shall be very glad to do so. And now, is there anything else you have found difficult that I could assist you in ? ”

“ Yes. I read—‘ Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it ’ (Matt. vii. 13, 14). I thought the way to eternal life was so easy ; if not, how then can I find it ? ” inquired Clara.

“ It is easy, in one sense. The very simplicity of the gospel makes the difficulty. It is hard to human nature to give up all its self-righteousness, and to cast itself entirely upon Christ. Christians must have many troubles ere they can subdue their evil inclinations and propensity to sin. Many who desire to follow Christ, do not love his way. Worldly pleasure, ambition, or pride, perhaps, come across their path, and lead them to desire to follow the multitude to do evil. Perhaps one of the greatest trials the believer has to encounter arises from his separation from the world. We all shrink from meeting the sneers

of the ungodly. I have known many a feeble-minded Christian nearly falling from a feeling of this kind. We must all pray and strive against such a sin ; it is an awful thing to be ashamed of Him who died to save us ! How beautifully does St Paul speak of his own feeling when he says to the Romans, ' I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ! ' Perhaps there never was a man of more learning than this great apostle of the Gentiles ; and yet all gave way before his zeal for Christ, even when addressing the Romans, the greatest people then existing. Oh, may we all be bold as St Paul, in proclaiming what we know to be the truth ! Let us pray, and strive to walk only in the narrow way ; and though thorns and briars may sometimes be in our path, yet with the eye of faith we may ever see before us a bright and shining light, which will guide us safely to the end. You have perhaps not read the ' Pilgrim's Progress ' ?

" No, I have not."

" It is a very old book, written by a good man, who lived in those dark times when believers were much persecuted for certain religious opinions. The difficulties the Pilgrim meets with are so very true, I am sure you would feel interested in perusing it."

" I will get it the first opportunity. Thank you for recommending it to me," said Clara.

" I hope I am not intruding upon you this morning, Miss Howard. There is something else I particularly wish to mention, if you will allow me."

" Certainly ; I am perfectly at liberty," replied Clara.

" Did you consider yesterday when you refused to par-

take of the Lord's Supper, that you were disobeying a dying command of your Saviour?"

Clara looked alarmed. "Do not say refused, Mr Langford; I felt I was not good enough. Some time, indeed, I sincerely trust, I shall be able to present myself."

"I thought this was your motive, and I should be the last person in the world to desire you to eat and drink to your own condemnation. But what does our prayer-book tell us is required of those who come to this holy sacrament? 'Repent you truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men.' Now, I trust you do sincerely repent of your sins, and desire to lead a new life. Of course, if I did not believe this of you, I could not speak thus—for when a person is living openly in sin, I could not conscientiously administer the sacrament to him; but when you tell me it is only a feeling of unworthiness prevents you, I feel I can offer you sufficient encouragement to come. If you wait until you are worthy, you will never come at all—for the more we study God's Word, the more sinful we shall feel ourselves to be; but Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Come and partake in the robe of his righteousness, and he will purely purge away your sin; come in faith, nothing doubting. At the same time that I give you all this consolation, I must warn you diligently to examine yourself before you presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. It will not do to ask forgiveness for your past sins, and then fall back again. God is now holding out mercy to you. Oh! embrace it while you may, before it is too late. Study deeply this subject;

repent truly ; and then in faith, I trust I may see you next time approach the Lord's table."

Clara had shaded her face with her hands, while the man of God reasoned with her. She felt she had erred in not seeking assistance in this matter sooner, and a tear fell from under the long silken eye-lashes, as she said, in a low voice—"I am very sorry for my neglect ; I assure you it was only my own feeling of unworthiness that prevented me."

"Yes, I know it ; I blame myself for not having mentioned the subject to you last week. Will you read this little book ? It will explain better than I can the benefits we receive from the Holy Communion ; and may I ask you also to read, with prayer, the 11th chapter of the first of Corinthians ? I shall not fear the result, if you are anxious to become one of the fold of the Good Shepherd."

"I trust I am indeed desirous of being one. I wish you knew how much indebted I feel to you and Mrs Neville for your kind assistance. I want to give up the world, and to be a Christian, not in name only, but in deed and in truth."

"And you will never regret it, my dear Miss Howard. 'Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.' I will not trespass any longer on your time." And he rose to depart.

"Will you give my love to Mrs Neville, and tell her, if convenient, I will call for her to drive with me this afternoon—about three, not later ? We are expecting the Earl of Wentworth this afternoon, and I think I should not be out after five, in case papa should not be able to receive him."

"I will tell my sister. I am sure it will give her great pleasure to accompany you if she can. You cannot think how grateful I feel to you for taking her these drives. She is so little able to walk now, that it is almost all the fresh air she gets."

"I am the obliged party—it is such a pleasure to have a friend with me," said Clara, smiling.

A sudden thought came into her mind, as Mr Langford was wishing her good-bye :—"Would you, if you have an opportunity of speaking to Lord Wentworth while he is with us, say something about—about these things? He is" (she blushed deeply) "a very esteemed friend."

"Certainly ; if I can do so, I will," said Mr Langford ; and, giving her one of his peculiarly sweet smiles, he departed.

The wheels of Miss Howard's carriage were heard driving rapidly up the park the same afternoon, as the dressing-bell rung for dinner. Much to her relief, she found Sir Edward had been down in time to receive the earl, of whose arrival there were unmistakable signs, in guns, fishing-rods, &c., in the hall. Clara passed rapidly to her own room to prepare for dinner. Resigning herself to the hands of her maid, her toilet was soon completed, and she descended to the drawing-room. Lord Wentworth was there alone. The pleasure with which he greeted her amazed Clara, who had not supposed him capable of such feelings of friendship for her—for such she merely understood his interest in her to be.

"What a sweet place this is ! The quiet is so refreshing after the noisy, bustling town. I declare I feel quite another man already !" he exclaimed.

"It is, indeed, delightful. How you can spend most of your time in London, is a mystery I cannot solve. For my part, I think I should never be tired of the country," said Clara, smiling.

"Nor should I, under certain circumstances ; but perfect solitude would not suit me—life would be a burden."

"I should have thought, my lord, you might have found resources in yourself."

"Yes, for a time I might. Reading, shooting, fishing, &c., are all very well in their way."

"And you could think of no other sources of pleasure?"

"No, I know of none. The fact is, I have lived so many years in a world of excitement, I could not leave it, unless" (and he lowered his voice) "I had some nearer and dearer ties to bring me away ; then how willingly would I spend *all* my time in the country!"

Clara would not understand his allusions, and only smiled as she replied—"I shall, perhaps, be able to shew you a better way of passing your time while you are here."

"And whatever way it may be, I shall enjoy it with such a teacher," Lord Wentworth said.

Sir Edward just then entered the room, and dinner was announced.

CHAPTER X.

"Suffer that little children come to me ;
Forbid them not.' Embolden'd by His words,
The mothers onward press ; but finding vain
The attempt to reach the Lord, they trust their babes
To strangers' hands. The innocents, alarm'd
Amid the throng of faces all unknown,
Shrink trembling,—till their wandering eyes discern
The countenance of Jesus, beaming love
And pity ; eager then they stretch their arms,
And, cowering, lay their heads upon His breast."

GRAHAM.

LEAVING the gentlemen when dinner was over, Clara retired to her own room ; and there, seeing the sun shone so brightly, and hearing the birds still singing sweetly, she threw a shawl over her slender figure, and, taking the little book Mr Langford had left her, she went out into the garden, to a certain retired part, at some distance from the house, and almost away from the rest of the walks. There was a summer-house, near which the little brook came tumbling down from above, over some rocks, forming a pretty water-fall : there was more water than in the higher garden, and, except a slender fence, there was no other separation from a large meadow beyond. Seating herself in the summer-house, Clara began to read, but was soon interrupted by hearing a very little child's voice singing—

"There is beyond the sky
A heaven of joy and love;
And holy children, when they die,
Go to that world above."

Clara looked up, and perceived a little girl, of about five years old, in the meadow, gathering some roses from the hedge. She waited until the verse was finished, and then said, in a gentle voice—"What are you doing there, little one?"

"I was looking for flowers, lady," said the child, frightened.

"Do not be afraid of me. What do you want the flowers for, eh?"

"For my mother, lady. She is in bed, and she likes the roses; so I came to get some for her."

"Come over here, then, and I will give you some prettier flowers than those," said Clara, kindly.

The child hesitated for a moment, but the kind smile on Miss Howard's face re-assured her; and, creeping under the rails, she was soon standing by Clara's side.

"Now, tell me, dear, who is your mother, and what makes her ill?"

"They call her mother, and God makes her ill, the clergyman says."

"But has she no other name? What does your father call her?" asked Clara.

"Father's gone, long ago."

"Where to, my child?"

"To heaven, to be with Jesus Christ; and mother says she's going too; and what will I do when she's gone?"

And the poor little child burst into tears. The heiress of all those broad lands, stretching as far as the eye could

reach, stooped down, and took hold of the child's dirty little hand, and said—"Poor little girl! some one will take care of you, I am sure."

"Yes, Mr Langford said Jesus would; but I would rather go with mother to heaven than be without her, all alone."

"Then Mr Langford comes to see your mother?"

"Yes, and the kind lady, too. Mother loves them."

"And where do you live?"

"By the green."

"Yes, but what part of the green?"

"Near John Taylor's."

Miss Howard was as much enlightened as ever.

"And what do they call you?"

"Ellen," replied the child.

"Well, I must try to come and see you to-morrow, if you would like me."

"Yes, I should; you look so kind."

Clara smiled.

"Now, if you will come with me, I will give you the flowers I promised you."

Then taking the child's hand, she led her up the bank into the flower-garden. Little Ellen was evidently astonished at the many beauties that met her eye.

"Is it pretty?" asked Clara, seeing the wondering look in the child's eyes.

"It's bonnie, very bonnie; but heaven is a bonnier place, I know."

"How do you know that, Ellen?"

"Because I heard mother say that there was nothing so bonnie as heaven. It's never dark there, and we shall

never be ill, nor cry any more. Oh ! I wish I was there, for I often cry now."

The tears started into Clara's eyes as she remembered the verse, " Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

" You are right. Heaven is a much more beautiful place than this, and I hope some day you will go there ; but you must first learn to love Jesus."

" But I *do* love him now. He died for me ; and he said little children were to come to him. I heard Mrs Neville read it," said the child, earnestly.

Clara could not speak for a moment with astonishment, that a child so young should know and appreciate the gospel, while she had lived so many years in utter ignorance of it. Never had she felt more humbled.

" Little Ellen, will you come and see me sometimes ?" she said, after a pause, when they emerged from the shrubbery, and approached the house.

" Yes, if I may, some time ; but I would be afraid to come all by myself to this big place."

" But I will send for you. Now, we must have some flowers."

And still holding the child's hand, she stooped down to gather with the other.

* * * * *

" Certainly, my lord, you have my free consent to do so. Deeply as I should feel the separation, I could fully trust my child to you. I am not at all aware what her feelings are towards you, further than that she esteems you most highly ; but I must say I hope you may have

success," said Sir Edward, as, with his companion, they rose to go to the drawing-room.

"How can I ever thank you, Sir Edward? I must leave the issue of my fate to chance—for I have no reason to believe Miss Howard will accept my hand. If she does not," he added to himself, "my life henceforth will be a blank."

Miss Howard was not in the drawing-room. So, opening the window, they stepped out on the lawn. The first glance shewed Clara, almost on her knees, gathering flowers for the little girl, whose hand she still held. Something like anger mounted to the proud brow of Sir Edward, as he beheld his daughter, the beautiful, elegant heiress of all around, thus employed.

"Good heavens! what will Clara do next? Wash the feet of beggars, I suppose! Bless my heart, I never saw anything so absurd!"

Lord Wentworth smiled a gratified smile. "Excuse me, Sir Edward. I never saw Miss Howard look so lovely before."

"Glad if *you* can think so, my lord, for *I* do not. I had not suspected her of such a want of dignity."

They passed on towards her; and the soft turf prevented their footsteps being heard.

Clara was saying—"If Jesus takes your mother away, Ellen, you know she will be safe with him; and so you must try to wait patiently till he sends for you to go to her."

What did the earl think of her he loved then? For an instant it seemed as if an angel spoke, so soft and musical was the voice.

But Sir Edward exclaimed—"In the name of goodness, Clara, what does all this mean?"

The child looked frightened, and caught hold of Clara's rich silk dress. Miss Howard started, and blushed excessively.

"I am giving this little girl some flowers for her mother, who is ill, papa."

"Well! I really do not see the necessity for you to do it. One of the gardeners ——"

Clara playfully put her hand on his lips. She then dismissed the little girl, telling her she would not forget to come and see her mother.

"Now, my dear girl, do be reasonable!" said Sir Edward, when Ellen had disappeared through the trees. "What need had you to bend so humbly for that dirty, ragged child?"

Clara turned to him, and put her arm affectionately through his, and said—"Dear padre, do not be angry with me."

"I should be a wretch if I were. All I wanted to ask was, why you should lower yourself by gathering flowers for her, when one of the gardeners could have done it so much better?"

"I should not have liked to give up the pleasure to any one. That little child has taught me a lesson, I trust I shall never forget."

"May I ask what it was?" said Lord Wentworth.

"Faith in Christ, a perfect fearlessness in death, and a nearer view of the glories of heaven than I have ever had before."

The earl bit his lip, and looked grave; and Sir Edward

replied—"She probably knew nothing about the reality of death."

"I beg your pardon, papa. A moment before you came up, she had been telling me she knew people were ill, and often had to lie in bed a long time, and then they grew white and cold, and were carried to the dark grave in the churchyard, and the grass grew over them; but if they were good, their souls went to heaven—the blessedness of which she knew far better than I did."

"My dear Clara, this is a most distressing subject to have chosen for conversation."

"Dear papa, forgive me! We, too, must die—why should we shrink from speaking of it? It is a solemn question; but we ought each of us to ask ourselves if we are prepared to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

A pause ensued. The earl looked agitated, and Sir Edward's lip slightly quivered. One of the gardeners approaching, requested to speak with his master, and Sir Edward accompanied him to the hot-house. When he was gone, Lord Wentworth turned to Clara, and said, gently—"Dear Miss Howard, is it right for you to give way to such gloomy thoughts and fears? Why think of these things *now*, and spoil your happiness?"

Clara's deep blue eyes were raised to his face, half in pity, half in sorrow, as she replied—"Why, if I ought not to think of these things, do I see every Sunday written on my mother's tombstone—'Prepare to meet thy God'—'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh'?"

Lord Wentworth looked grave. "Well, but do you

not think, when the time comes, strength will be given to go through the conflict of death ?”

“ Not unless Christ is there. Reason may boast of teaching people how to die ; but in that solemn hour, something more is wanted to rest upon. And though I do not believe it impossible that many have truly repented at the last hour, yet we have no reason to presume that the same favour will be conferred upon us. Will God accept only the last few hours of our life, when all our days should have been spent in His service ? I was reading some time ago about the dying thief, when Mrs Neville was with me, and I remember her telling me how some good man, in writing on the subject, had said, ‘ *One* instance only was recorded of acceptance in the last hour, and *only* one, that all may have hope, but none may presume.’ And after all, Lord Wentworth, how much better it would be to live only for Christ—there is so much more satisfaction in following him than in the indulgence of sin. I am sure you would find it so if you would but try it.”

She ceased, and both stood silent for some time. The earl’s thoughts wandered over years long past, when almost the same words had been spoken to him by his only sister on her death-bed. Again he seemed to see her, as he stood by her bed-side, and watched her life calmly pass away, unruffled by a single doubt. All was peace to the last ; and even in death, the faint, joyful smile had lingered on her lips—joy in the glorious prospect before her. The earl brushed his hand over his eyes to hide what he considered a weakness, and then said—“ These are different sentiments to what you once entertained, I think ?”

"I trust so, indeed."

"And who has taught you all this, may I ask?"

"My Bible."

The earl added no more, and they slowly turned towards the house.

That night, ere retiring to rest, Clara read as usual a chapter in her Bible, and the twenty-fifth of St Matthew was the one next in order. When she read those awful words to those on the left hand of Christ, she trembled as she thought of the fearful doom of the unrighteous. Oh, how dreadful if she, or any dear to her, should be among those unrighteous ones! And, falling on her knees, she prayed long and fervently that all might be brought to the knowledge of God ere it was too late. She rose refreshed and comforted, with that sweet passage in her mind—"When they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." How sweet she felt it now to be able to rest upon the Rock of Ages in all anxiety and distress!—sweet voices seemed around her, telling her her prayer was heard.

* * * * *

Next morning, Sir William and Lady Mortimer called, to beg Sir Edward and his daughter would join their family, the following day, in an excursion to a neighbouring abbey. The invitation was accepted, Sir Edward seeming particularly pleased with the proposed plan. The day proving fine, they set out, accompanied by the earl, whose previous intention of spending the day on the moors seemed suddenly to have vanished.

Hilton Abbey was about ten miles from Beech-hall, and it was agreed that the party should all meet there at a

certain hour. The drive lay through the most beautiful woods, with here and there openings from which, for many miles, the gray towers of the Hall could be seen, and the river winding peacefully along in the grounds. A large party was assembled at Hilton, and a very merry one. It was great enjoyment to Clara—the scenery was so delightful, the day so lovely, and the company so very agreeable—as, leaning on the earl's arm, they conversed with different parties, or walked about together. Sir Edward, too, seemed so much better than usual, that Clara had seldom felt in such high spirits.

"Shall we stay and see the abbey by moonlight?" said Sir William Mortimer, as the party were preparing to separate after dinner.

"I should like it," "And I," "And I," was echoed on all sides. Sir Edward joined in the scheme, much to Clara's amazement, as she feared the effect of the night air on her father, in an open carriage. He seemed, however, to have set his heart upon it, and they remained. And certainly it was very beautiful. The night was very lovely and warm, and the stillness that reigned around was unbroken, save by the hoot of the owl, or the voices of some of the party.

"How finely that old tree stands out in this light!" said the earl to Clara.

"I have just been thinking so. I should like to sketch it, if it were not so late, and I so much out of practice," said Clara.

"Do you not think a scene like this softens and solemnises the mind, Miss Howard?"

"Indeed, I do. I do not know why people should be

thought sentimental because they enjoy a scene by moonlight more than when the sun is shining in mid-day."

"It very much depends upon the character, I think. Some people are very fond of talking in a dreamy kind of way about moonlight, and so forth, and yet have not the slightest perception of the real beauty of it."

"I quite agree with you ; but I imagine a thoughtful mind will really appreciate the still, calm effect of evening. I often walk round the garden at this time. The peaceful feeling there is, when all is hushed and calm, makes me able to raise my heart to holier, higher things, than during the day, when there is often confusion and hurry."

"I wish I could feel as you do ! Dear as this hour is *now* to me, I should not like to spend many solitary evenings in meditation."

"It depends so much upon what you think about. If your thoughts are sad, I grant it, the evening will not tend to dissipate them ; but if your meditations have a tendency to lead your mind to Him who made all these beauties, surely the evenings would never be solitary to you."

"I believe not ; but my mind cannot receive them as you do. I fear I am getting too old now to amend in that respect."

"Oh, my lord ! how can you say so ?"

"Well, will you be my teacher ? Then, I doubt not, I shall be able to think as you would wish me."

"I fear I could not lead you to it ; I only wish I could !"

"Do you ? Then will you ——"

The sentence remained unfinished, for Sir Edward joined them to say the carriage was waiting, and it was getting late. They returned with him, and were soon on their way home.

"Drive carefully, Simpson; the horses seem very restive to-night, and mind how you go down the bank," said Sir Edward, as he perceived the difficulty the coachman had in holding the horses in.

"Had we not better walk down there, papa?" said Clara, for she knew how frightfully steep the hill was, and a precipice on one side of the road.

"Pooh! nonsense, my dear. If Simpson is only careful, there is no need to fear, I am sure."

Clara said no more; but she watched intently as they went along, as much as the increasing darkness under the trees permitted her.

"We are going at a fearful pace. I am sure Simpson cannot restrain the horses—and down the bank, too!" exclaimed Sir Edward. After they had gone a few miles, Clara involuntarily caught hold of something; and well she did so, for presently the carriage was jerked over a very large stone, and the coachman thrown from the box.

"Goodness! the horses are entirely without control—Simpson is thrown off!" exclaimed Sir Edward.

Lord Wentworth, who had been sitting with his back to the box, sprang upon the seat, and thence to the coachman's place, just in time to secure the reins, and, with all the strength he was master of, endeavoured to stop the horses. The footman descended from his seat, and ran to try to get hold of their heads; while the

horses, finding they could not spring forward, commenced backing violently to the side of the precipice.

"Lose no time—get out immediately!" exclaimed the earl. Sir Edward and his daughter instantly obeyed the order. Lord Wentworth sprang from the box at the same moment, and seized the horses' heads, and, with an immense effort of strength, prevented them from throwing themselves over the precipice, and subdued them so effectually that they soon became quiet.

Sir Edward, meanwhile, had gone back to see where the coachman was. He found him at some little distance, just recovering from the effects of his fall, which had at first stunned him, fortunately otherwise unhurt; and, after waiting a few minutes, he was able to rejoin the rest of the party.

Clara had remained, pale and trembling, a few minutes alone, until the earl had secured the horses and despatched the footman to the nearest house. He knew she was safe; he had heard her tell him so, and that she was unhurt, and he thought she was with Sir Edward. He was surprised, on turning round, to perceive her standing so near him.

"Oh, dear Miss Howard! thank Heaven, you are safe. I heard you say so. I dared not come to you a minute sooner. You are not faint? Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing, thank you. How much we are indebted to you, I can never tell you."

"Not a word of that, if you have any regard for me. You little know how willingly my life would have been spent in your service," he said, raising her hand respectfully to his lips.

"Will you allow me to assist you?" he said, offering his arm.

"Let us go and seek papa. I fear poor Simpson is hurt," said Clara, seeing Lord Wentworth was hesitating which way to go.

"Perhaps we had better do so."

They soon, however, met Sir Edward and the coachman coming towards them, the latter very little worse now for his fall.

"Well, what are we to do, Wentworth? Had not Elliot better go on home and send some fresh horses? I shall not feel comfortable to have the same pair for the rest of our journey."

"Decidedly not. I hear Elliot coming back. Now, had we not better make our way to the turnpike, and wait there until the horses come?"

Clara had, until now, felt perfectly calm and collected; but when all danger was past, a sickening feeling of terror for the escape they had had came over her, and Lord Wentworth felt the hand tremble on his arm.

"You are ill, I fear. What can I do for you? Stay, I have some wine in my pocket," he said, taking out a small case, with a little glass, and making her drink it, while he begged she would not proceed until she felt better. Clara, however, was afraid of making her father uneasy, and, feeling a little refreshed, said she would rather proceed. She could not but be conscious of the many delicate attentions from the earl as they went along; but though they walked slowly, she felt much fatigued ere they reached the turnpike. Here the people of the house made them as comfortable as they could, and

they waited until the carriage was ready again for them to return home.

The next few days, Sir Edward was very far from well : the excitement of the previous evening had been too much for him, and any sudden alarm was always what was so much dreaded for him. Clara was therefore obliged to be constantly either with him or the earl, whose shooting did not seem very successful, as he was always back before luncheon time ; so that Clara was quite unable to pay her promised visit to little Ellen's mother. Neither did she see anything of her parsonage friends : though Mr Langford had called to inquire how Sir Edward was, he had not stayed to see her, as she was engaged at the time.

"Do you never ride now?" said the earl, one day, after Sir Edward had recovered sufficiently for Clara to leave him.

"Yes, sometimes, but not very lately."

"I should be very happy to accompany you, if you would like to go to-day," said Lord Wentworth.

"Do, Clara ; it will do you good, dear," said her father.

"I shall be very happy to do so," Clara replied.

The horses were ordered, and Miss Howard and Lord Wentworth were soon cantering down the park. And certainly it was a most delightful ride. Clara felt she was no longer proof against the fascinations of so talented and agreeable a man, who did his utmost to bring his noble ideas and elegant conversation before her. "Oh, if he were but religious," she thought, "how perfect he would be!" How well she felt they could appreciate one another ! Clara had received a somewhat singular educa-

tion, and, as a natural result, had imbibed an original mode of reasoning and conversing. Her father had for so many years superintended her studies himself, that it might have been supposed her ideas would have been too masculine for her gentle, sensitive nature ; but it was otherwise—it had tended to strengthen her mind, without detracting the least from that beautiful feminine simplicity which all admire so much in woman. Yet her manners were so calm and gentle, that, though many admired, few could rightly appreciate those hidden gems of the soul, which, when once brought out, shone so brightly ; but Lord Wentworth knew and understood all, and each hour spent with her only served to engrave her image more closely on his heart ; and yet he knew not why—he dared not hope his affection would be returned. His lips refused to utter what his feelings dictated, and they returned from their ride, friends—nothing more. As they entered the village, they met Mrs Neville and Mr Langford. Clara took the opportunity of inquiring about little Ellen's mother. Mr Langford said she was very ill, and not likely to live much longer. He should be very glad if Miss Howard would visit her. This she promised to do ; and after congratulations for their escape the evening before, they separated.

“How beautiful Miss Howard did look ! Certainly she is the loveliest woman I ever saw,” said Mrs Neville, when Clara and Lord Wentworth had cantered on, with her feathers waving in the wind, the rich bloom in her face, the blue eyes sparkling, and such a sweet, innocent smile playing round her lips.

“Yes, but her beauty is the least thing I like about

her, Emily. She is a very fine character, and yet there is so much simplicity, and perfect freedom from pride about her, I do not know who could help liking her. I think she said that was Lord Wentworth with her. I have often wished to see so justly celebrated a man, and his appearance quite corresponds with all I know of his character," replied Mr Langford.

In the afternoon, Sir Edward and Lord Wentworth being together, Clara gladly prepared for her walk into the village, to see Mrs Ward, the little girl's mother. She had not much difficulty in finding the place from Mr Langford's description. The room was very neat, and tolerably well furnished. The poor woman was in bed, evidently in a state of great suffering. The little child had a brush in her hand, and was trying as well as she could to sweep up the ashes. She threw it down immediately on seeing Miss Howard, and, running up to her, she put her little black hand in hers, saying, "O mother! this is the kind lady who gave me the flowers."

Clara saw they were still there, though nearly all faded, in the only glass the house possessed. She took her seat beside the poor woman, and kindly inquired into her circumstances, which she briefly related. She had married, against her parents' will, a man who, though in every respect worthy of her, was not equal in position to herself. Her parents had disowned her, but she had lived very happily until a year before, when her husband died. She had taken this trial so much to heart, that it had thrown her into a decline. She had only just enough to live upon; but earnestly desiring to die in her native place, she had a month or two previously made her way back to

Wilmington. She found her parents were dead, but had obtained this little cottage, and was determined to remain and die there. Clara listened attentively, and then promised to send her some strengthening food ; and having read a chapter in the Bible, rose to depart.

"I am very much obliged to you for coming, ma'am. Mr Langford told me you had kindly promised to do so. You cannot tell how much indebted I am to him and his sister for all they have done for me. I was a lost sinner, unconscious of my sins, before they led me to seek for Jesus ; and now, I trust, I have a good hope that my sins, which are many, are forgiven, and that I shall be taken to heaven when I die. My only anxiety is for my poor little child, who will have no one to protect her when I am gone."

"Yes ; she shall not be left without a friend," said Clara, kindly ; "but I will come and see you again soon, and talk more about it."

"Thank you—thank you," said the woman, in a low voice, the tears coming into her eyes.

Clara only found time to go for a few minutes to the parsonage, to ask Mrs Neville to let her know if Mrs Ward seemed worse, as she feared it might be a day or two before she could come again, and she felt very wishful to see her once more. Mrs Neville promised she should know, and Clara returned home.

CHAPTER XI.

"I do not love thee ; yet, when thou art gone,
I hate the sound, though those who speak be dear,
Which breaks the lingering echo of thy tone
Thy voice of music leaves upon mine ear.
I do not love thee ; yet, when thou art gone,
Whate'er thou dost seems still well done to me ;
And often, in my solitude, I sigh
That those I do love are not more like thee."

"I AM so glad our parsonage friends will be able to come to us this evening," said Sir Edward, a few mornings after Clara had paid her visit to the village.

"Yes, so am I ! I shall like Lord Wentworth to know them. I think Mr Langford and he will get on admirably together—they have both so much in common to interest them," said Clara.

Lord Wentworth had gone to the moors that day—so Clara was at liberty once more ; and after reading the newspaper to her father, she retired for a few moments to her own room to arrange some things, and then determined to lose no further time, and go again to Mrs Ward's, as Lord Wentworth would be home for luncheon ; after which her father was generally engaged, and the earl either read to her while she worked, or they walked in the grounds. While finishing her arrangements, a note

was brought to her from Mr Langford, informing her that he had called to inquire after the poor woman, and had found a great change had come over her. She was evidently dying ; and if she again desired to see her alive, she must come immediately. Hastily dressing herself for her walk, she set out for the village, and soon after entered the chamber of death. Mr Langford and one of the neighbours were in the house. The poor woman lay supported by pillows, gasping for breath ; while little Ellen was sitting on a small stool, weeping bitterly. The cold dews of death lay on the mother's forehead, but her hands were clasped as if in prayer ; and often she tried to turn to look at her child.

"Ellen, you must be a good girl, and love Jesus ; and then you will come to me soon," she said, in broken sentences.

"Susan, are you happy ?" asked Mr Langford, in his kind way, bending over her.

"Yes, all is well," she said ; "but oh, my little child ! Who will take care of her ?"

"I will. She shall have a home with me as long as she lives," said Clara, in a low sweet voice.

"Bless you—bless you ! and thank you all for what you have done for me. Mr Langford, I am very happy. You have taught me ——" The sentence remained unfinished—she gasped for breath ; and the last struggle seized her. A few moments, and all was still, and they were in the presence of death ; and the soul of one had returned to God who gave it.

Little Ellen, who had been lifted up to kiss her mother for the last time, remained seated on the bed, crying

bitterly to go to be with her. Gently Mr Langford lifted her from the bed, and took her upon his knee; then putting his arm kindly round her, he made the little head rest on his shoulder; while sweetly he talked to her of heaven and the happiness of her mother, until the little child's violent sobbing ceased, and she became calmer. At length, the eyes closed; and wearied with her sorrow, she slept. Perhaps never had Clara felt more drawn towards Mr Langford than by this mark of the kindness of his disposition. He lifted the sleeping child in his arms, and carried her to a neighbour's house, where he himself laid her on a bed, and then returned to Clara, who looked pale and ill, and the tears were in her eyes.

"You are not quite well, I fear, Miss Howard? Do come in and see Emily. You are not fit to walk home just yet. May I offer you a little assistance?"

She accepted his arm, for she had never been in the chamber of death before; and there is something inexpressibly awful in the departure of the spirit. It is then we remember, "We, too, must die." The clergyman spoke very beautifully, as they went along, of the little terror death has for the Christian; leading Clara to dwell upon the promises of God, where Christ is said to have overcome death. "We must think of it as the gate of everlasting life—not as the opening of the grave, as many do, who seem to shrink from what they know their bodies will be subject to. Of how little consequence should we regard this! I think it a very useful lesson to see the death-bed of one who dies in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection."

"I trust it may be so to me. Certainly it makes me

less afraid to die ; for I hope I am now learning how to live, so that I may meet death as fearlessly as that poor woman," replied Clara.

They had now arrived at the parsonage, and Clara found Mrs Neville at home, and had the pleasure of a long conversation with her. Time passed so rapidly, she was only just able to reach home in time for luncheon.

" We shall meet in the evening, I hope," said Clara.

" Yes, I hope so," replied Mrs Neville.

The earl was in the garden when she returned ; he saw her instantly, and hastened to meet her.

" Where have you been, fair lady ? I thought I got a glimpse of you coming out of a cottage in the village, as I passed along the road," the earl said, playfully.

" I daresay you might ; but I was so much engrossed with other things at the time, I did not notice the dog-cart passing."

" I feel very curious to know if you like visiting the poor, or if you only do it as a duty ?"

" I certainly do it as a pleasure ; though I have done so little yet, I can hardly say I do visit them."

" And were you pleased this morning ?"

" Well ! that would hardly be the word. The poor person I went to see died while I was there ; but so happily, I could not say it was a sorrowful thing to see, except the distress of her little child."

" And have you really been subjecting yourself to such a scene as this ? Surely, my dear Miss Howard, you are only unnerving yourself," said Lord Wentworth, earnestly.

" You are mistaken, indeed ; I am very glad I was there. I now see how blessed a thing it is to be ready to die."

"What do you mean by being ready?" inquired the earl.

"I know so little of my Bible yet by heart, I cannot remember many texts to the point; but one thing I know, that we are always to live as we should wish to do if we came to die. And there is a text or two which now occurs to me. One is, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith' (Heb. xii. 1, 2). In another, we are told to 'live as strangers and pilgrims on the earth;' also, 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.' If we would die happily, we must live as if each day might be our last. If I were better acquainted with my Bible, I could tell you a great many more rules for living as we ought. But will you not read the Bible for yourself?" she asked, earnestly, and raising her eyes to him with so sweet a look, he could not resist her.

"Certainly; if *you* wish it, I will."

"Not because *I* wish it, but because God commands us to search the Scriptures," replied Clara, firmly.

"And who, may I ask, induced you to read them?"

"Our clergyman, whom you will see this evening, and his sister, both try to teach me what is right."

"Ah, yes. Well, you know, it is *his* duty to persuade people to do these things."

"And mine, too. We ought all to try to make one another do what is right; but I wish you would talk to him yourself—he would argue better than I can."

"I doubt that. If you cannot persuade me, no one else

can, I am quite sure," was the reply, as they re-entered the house.

The evening was a very pleasant one ; all seemed mutually pleased with one another. The earl admired the earnest, truthful minister of Christ ; while Mr Langford, in return, was delighted with the brilliant talents and zealous patriotism of Lord Wentworth. Clara was pleased to observe how much they conversed with one another, and she trusted an opportunity might be found of speaking on serious subjects, after she and Mrs Neville had retired to the drawing-room. Mr Langford, ever true to his calling, failed not to draw the earl's attention to better things ; but conviction had not entered his heart. He had heard the gracious invitation, " Come unto me," too often with indifference, to pay much attention to it now. He listened while the clergyman spoke, and admitted he was right ; but, like Felix, he judged it was not a convenient season—some time he intended to be a Christian. He, however, did not absent himself from the evening prayers, and the chapter Mr Langford selected startled him. It was the 17th of Jeremiah, in which those awful words occur, " Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord ;" and then the blessedness of the righteous is spoken of, when compared to a tree planted by the water ; after which is that solemn declaration, " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ?" and in the 13th verse, " O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord,

the fountain of living waters." The deep, manly voice of Mr Langford, and the impressive manner in which he entreated his hearers to flee from the wrath to come, and set before them the hatefulness of sin, and the blessedness of the righteous, startled Lord Wentworth. His arms were folded, and his head bent down to the ground. The truth flashed forcibly upon him. For whom had he been living? Was it not for one earthly object? And the solemn words of God pronounced a curse upon those who make flesh their arm. He felt his heart had departed from the Lord. A fearful feeling stole over him of hopes crushed, affections blighted; and then a gleam of conviction came upon him. He saw the cause of all his loneliness and disappointment in the world. He rose from his knees, after the prayer, an humbler though not a better man. His wish was to drown all these stings of conscience. He felt he must not remain longer near Mr Langford. He should never have a happy moment, were his voice constantly in his ears reminding him of his sins, and warning him of future punishment. He determined he would not delay asking the hand of Clara, and if accepted, would persuade the Howards to return to London, where he would be free from the earnestness of Mr Langford. The earl was not the only one who was impressed that evening. Sir Edward leant forward, attentively pondering in his own mind his forgetfulness of God, and resolving, were his life spared, to spend the remainder of his days to Him who had redeemed him.

* * * * *

"Do you not think, Henry, Lord Wentworth is

attached to Miss Howard?" asked Mrs Neville, as they walked home that evening.

"Yes, I think so; and I am inclined to think Miss Howard esteems him very highly, as well."

"But do you think she would accept a man so entirely devoid of religion as he appears to be?"

"I do not know. Her principles may not yet be sufficiently fixed to lead her to see the danger of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. I wish Lord Wentworth were a pious man. I have seldom been so pleased with any one—and so formed, too, for Miss Howard, and a marriage in every way so suitable for her. It is a great pity—very great," said Mr Langford, musingly.

"Yes, I do think it is, Henry; but he may yet become a Christian, who knows?"

"I trust so, Emily; but it would be a dangerous thing to marry with such an uncertainty. But perhaps, after all, Emily, our suppositions are incorrect. There may be no attachment on either side."

"There may not on Miss Howard's, but I think Lord Wentworth's is unmistakable."

"Well, in all things we know that there is an overruling Providence; and if Miss Howard seeks assistance where it may be found, she will undoubtedly be directed to what is right."

"Yes, I know it."

"Did you hear what she said about little Ellen Ward?"

"No; what was it?"

"That she should like to have her with her as soon as possible. I told her I thought it might not be desirable


for her always to remain at the Hall, there would be so many temptations to spoil a child. That after a time, a nice school, where she would receive a good Christian education, would be desirable."

"I daresay you are right; but Miss Howard seems so fond of the little girl, she would feel it hard to part with her."

"Yes, she admitted that; but agreed that I was right in my suggestion."

"Here we are," said Mrs Neville, as they opened the garden gate.

The next day, Lord Wentworth spent on the moors; while Clara and her father studied together the Word of God for some hours. In this case, the child became the teacher. Clara comprehended far more of the truths of the gospel than her parent. Her mind was unfettered by love of the world, ill-health, or anything of suspicion. Her faith was firm; by long previous conviction, the Holy Spirit had been preparing her for the reception of the truth. The longings of her heart were at length being satisfied—she had seen, and embraced with eagerness, the hope of salvation held out to every returning penitent—she had fled for refuge to her Saviour. Her feelings had since known no change. What she believed was fully proved ere her mind received it; and when once fixed, was abiding, because founded on the Rock of Ages. Sir Edward was very unlike her. Indifference, and want of energy in the discharge of duty, was what he had to overcome; and it was a hard struggle to shake off his lethargy, and rouse himself to begin to seek after the kingdom of heaven. In the evening, when Lord Went-



worth returned, he was grave, and seemed much out of spirits. After dinner, some one called on business with Sir Edward, and Clara and the earl were left together. She took up her work, while he inquired if he should read to her. She readily consented, and he commenced ; but soon a pause ensued, and Clara raised her eyes, meeting those of the earl fixed in a penetrating gaze upon her face—her eyes fell ; a thrill passed over her frame, and a blush dyed her cheek.

“ Are you tired ? ” she said, scarcely able to articulate the words.

“ Tired ! oh, no. I could read from morning to night, if you would listen to me.”

Clara tried to smile—she could not speak. She knew not what to say. Something told her Lord Wentworth loved her ; and she—oh ! she could not bear to think of it, the idea so absorbed her. No subject presented itself to her to break the disagreeable pause that ensued. How frequently, when we feel particularly wishful to speak, does this occur !—either in our confusion all subjects take their flight, or we cannot disentangle one from the confused mass. She vainly tried to play with her work ; there was a peculiar sensation in her throat ; tears were springing unbidden to her eyes, which, should she speak, were ready to pour down her cheeks. The earl, at length, after gazing upon her for a few moments, spoke ; first taking her hand, which she suffered to remain in his for a moment, and then hastily withdrew :—“ Miss Howard, will you give me your attention for a few minutes ? How I have longed for this hour, to tell you how much I love you ! From the time I saw you

first, and heard you speak to me, I have lived but for you. All I am—all I have—is yours. Will you but bestow upon me this precious hand, my whole life shall be devoted to making you happy."

He spoke rapidly, and his voice trembled. Clara's cheek blanched—an internal struggle was going on within her breast, as the conviction, for the first time, forced itself upon her, that she had a tenderer feeling for the earl than she had hitherto been aware of; but how dared she unite herself to one who knew not God—who could not walk with her in that narrow road, or assist her in a difficulty—one with whom she must return to the world, and again conform to those vanities which she was resolved henceforth to renounce? She felt earthly happiness must be given up, even were it to be the rending asunder of every earthly tie. Those were the words used when she had spoken to Mr Langford of the young ruler. She roused herself, and, in another strength, she replied, in a low voice—"My own feelings must be given up. Lord Wentworth, highly as I esteem you, I cannot, dare not marry you."

"Oh! Clara—Miss Howard—why? Don't drive from me every hope. What can I do? How can I prove my willingness to do anything to make you happy?"

"I do not doubt it; too happy, I fear, to make me give up the world."

"Is it—oh! can it be—you think I should be a hindrance to you in being a Christian? You shall do all you please, and make me what you like; only try me!" he exclaimed, fervently.

"It would be presumptuous in you or me to suppose

it possible your heart could be changed by any earthly being. Do not distress me ; I cannot bear it, indeed. Indeed, you little know how much I feel !” She paused, and buried her face in her hands, and wept bitterly.

The earl rested his head on his hand, in intense emotion—“ I know I am not a Christian, as you are ; but try me. I will study the Bible—I will do anything you may desire me. Will you not hear me ?”

Clara perceived she must hide her own emotion, or she should fail to convince him that his suit was hopeless.

“ I trust you will, indeed, study your Bible ; but not to please me. Earnestly shall I remember you in my prayers always, and ever feel a regard for you ; but I cannot hold out any hope to you. Let this painful hour be forgotten. We *must* cease to think of one another.”

Clara spoke calmly, and with decision. She felt how necessary it was to keep to her resolution, and the fearfulness of giving way made her speak with the greater firmness.

“ Oh ! will you not trust me—will not your father’s wishes have weight with you ?”

“ My father will not oppose my wishes. Oh ! Lord Wentworth, you little know how distressing this scene is to me. It is vain to attempt to shake my resolution, deeply as it pains me to hurt your feelings.”

The earl rested his head on the table, and neither of them spoke for some time. A thought had come into Clara’s mind. She rose and took from a drawer the beautiful Bible she had intended for her cousin Kate, and gently laid it on the table by her companion. He raised

his head, and took it in his hand, and said, in a low voice, "Will you give it to me?"

"Yes, if you will accept it from a friend," Clara replied. She was shocked to see how altered his countenance looked, he was so pale; and even those few moments seemed to have added years to his appearance. But he seemed desirous to be calm, and not to distress her he loved so well; but it was a consolation to see the tears slowly coursing one another down her cheeks.

"Will you write my name in it?" he said.

She took the Bible with a trembling hand. He watched her intently while she tremulously wrote his name. For a moment, her pen lingered on the page, and she again wrote—"Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth." "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

"Thank you," was said so mournfully, that Clara could scarcely restrain her emotion.

"We may never meet again on earth; for we know not what may happen. Could I but think you would take the Word of God as your future guide, you do not know how thankful I should be. Earthly love is very sweet; but I dare not think of it when comparing it with heavenly. My Bible has taught me I must give up all, if God sees fit to try my faith."

"Farewell, then; and may your future path be as happy as mine will be miserable!" the earl added, raising her hand to his lips, as she rose to leave the room.

The door closed; and Clara rapidly ascended to her own room, where, fastening the door, she threw herself upon a couch, and wept long and bitterly. It was her first real sorrow. She felt she loved Lord Wentworth

more than she had been at all aware. At first, she had only regarded him as a very esteemed friend ; but while he had been with them, his many noble qualities had drawn her more closely to him. She felt very miserable. How long she remained weeping thus, she knew not ; but at length a knock at her door roused her, and opening it, she saw her father.

"Are you in the dark ? Come to my dressing-room, dear," he said, kindly.

There was a fire there, and the candles lighted. Sir Edward drew her to him, and folded her in his arms—"My poor child ! poor child !" he said, gently laying her head on his shoulder, and letting her weep there.

When she grew a little calmer, she sat down at his feet, and, resting her head on his knee, she said, "You know all, dear papa."

"Yes, darling ; but do not talk about it if it pains you."

"It would be such a relief to tell you all," she said.


"Very well, dear. I fear you have made a great sacrifice, Clara. I hope you may not have to regret it."

"No, I do not think I shall do that. I am sure I have done what is right, and it will all be for my good."

"But consider, my love—are you justified in sacrificing both your own and Lord Wentworth's happiness ? I never saw any one so distressed in my life. I came in and found him almost unable to speak. Of course, he goes to-morrow morning ; but there is a chance yet, if you will only reconsider the matter."

"I cannot—indeed I cannot, papa."

"Well, I will not press you ; but I believe if any man in the world could have made you happy, or was worthy of you, it is Lord Wentworth."



"I believe it. I have never loved any one before, or yet seen any one who could have more fully answered my expectations, except in that one point."

"And, perhaps, you may never meet another."

"Then I will stay and live with you, papa, and we will be happy in each other," she said, throwing her arms round his neck. "If I *am* to be married, and to meet with some one who will lead me right, I know I shall do so; if not, dear papa, I know it will be all for the best. I am very sorry to have given Lord Wentworth pain. I feel how high a compliment such a man has paid me, by wishing to make me his wife; and I am not without suffering, too, papa, I can assure you," she said, tears again starting to her eyes.

"I believe you, my darling, and I pity you very much. I know it has been a struggle; but if you, from your heart, think it wrong to marry a man whose feelings on religious subjects do not correspond with your own, I will never blame you for it."

"Thank you, my dear, kind father."

Next morning, the earl took his departure; and though Clara, as she saw his carriage drive away, could not forbear a deep sigh, yet a feeling of peace was in her heart; for she knew she had done her duty, and she had not raised for herself a stumbling-block to her following Christ with all her heart. Years had rolled over ere Clara and Lord Wentworth met again, for he retired for some time from public life, so that there was no chance of ever meeting him in London, and she had no means of ascertaining whether he had made use of the Bible she had given him, or was still wandering on the dark mountains of error.

CHAPTER XII.

" I quit the world's fantastic joys,
Her honours are but empty toys,
Her bliss an empty shade ;
Like meteors in the midnight sky,
That glitter for a while and die,
Her glories flash and fade."

DR MORE.

FOR a week or two, Clara was much occupied in attendance upon her father, who, after the earl's departure, had a serious attack of illness. This tended much towards keeping her mind from the painful subject of her own sorrow ; for though she had, perhaps, not loved with the intensity which might have been expected from a nature like hers, yet she knew she could not have resisted the temptation of trusting her future happiness to him, in her own strength, and her heart had been wounded deeply. She was truly thankful he had left when he did, for each day he had been with them had only served to draw her heart more towards him, and, had he remained, she feared her happiness might have been much more seriously affected. She now never suffered her mind to dwell upon him—employing herself so much with other things, she had no leisure for painful thoughts. She saw Mrs Neville

almost daily, and grew more and more attached to her. There was not a feeling in which Mrs Neville could not sympathise, and Clara ever felt much benefited by her conversation. If any doubt or fear had occurred to her, her friend could always encourage and strengthen her faith. Sir Edward, too, seemed very anxious to have Mr Langford with him ; and many hours were spent in private together, while he was ill. As soon as her father was sufficiently recovered to come down-stairs, Clara received a note from Kate Hamilton, informing her of her mother's having had so severe an attack of illness, that she should be unable to visit Beech-hall at present. This was a great disappointment, for Clara had looked forward with great delight to Kate's visit.

A few days afterwards, however, Claude arrived on business to Sir Edward, when it was found necessary to return to London for a few weeks. Clara, though sorry to leave home again so soon, cheerfully acquiesced in her father's wish of accompanying him. Claude seemed very much out of spirits, though always glad to be with Clara ; yet, when he ceased his rattling conversation, something seemed wrong. Clara did not like to invite his confidence, but she feared, from something her cousin said, he had again offended his father. The morning of the day before they were to return to London, Claude came to Clara's sitting-room, and, seating himself by her, said—" Clara, may I ask your assistance ? for I declare, if you do not help me with my father, I do not know what I shall do."

" I shall be so glad if I can do anything for you," replied Clara, gently.

"I knew you would. But what will you say when I tell you I have been ——"

"Betting again, I fear. How faithfully you promised me, Claude, you would not do so any more!"

"Yes, I know I did. I was mad at the time, I am sure; but Wyville over-persuaded me, and I fell into the temptation."

"Why do you still associate with such young men, when you know how much your father disapproves of them?"

"My father wants to treat me so entirely like a child, I determined I would not be made a fool of; and so I met Wyville with some others one day, and the consequence was, to prove to my father I should do as I chose, I went with them to Tattersall's, and I was led on until I have got entangled in a very unpleasant predicament."

"I am very much grieved to hear it; but I must say you deserve it, Claude. Your father is very justly displeased with you. What right have you to set his authority aside, and oppose his wishes?"

"And *you* are angry with me! Well, if I can but get out of this, I never will—no, I swear I never will be tempted again! I feel *your* displeasure more than anything."

"You make promises in your own strength, and if so, you must fall again."

"Well! but my pride will come to my assistance."

"No, it will not. You must look higher before you can learn to resist." Clara stood for a moment in thought, and then said—"If I try you once more, will you promise you will endeavour to keep from what I must call your

besetting sin? Will you look for assistance where alone it can be found? I cannot interfere in your behalf again with my uncle; but I think I can myself relieve you from this embarrassment."

"No, that you never shall do, generous girl! That thought never entered my head."

"Listen to me, you foolish fellow! I am not going to give you anything; but if you will name the sum, I will *lend* it to you, as I have plenty on hand at present; and then, when you are able, you shall repay me."

"You are too good—indeed you are, my sweet guardian angel!" exclaimed her cousin, impetuously.

"You distress me by using such terms, Claude. How can I be an angel? Now do promise me, you will try not to yield again."

"No. I swear by ——"

"Hush—hush! pray do. You forget the words of Scripture, to 'swear not at all' As I have told you before, your promise is vain in your own strength. You have trusted in that too long; and you see how it has failed you. Let me beg you will seek assistance from the true Source, without which you cannot stand."

"Well, I will try to do all you wish, if you will shew me how."

"Well, we will talk more of that in a short time. Just now I want to go to the parsonage, to wish my friend Mrs Neville good-bye. Perhaps you will go with me?"

"Yes, to the end of the world!" he exclaimed so vehemently, that Clara laughed, and said—"Nonsense, Claude;" and then went to prepare for her walk.

Mrs Neville was unwell, and in bed ; so Clara went up to sit with her for half-an-hour, leaving Claude below with Mr Langford. Her friend looked pale and ill, Clara thought. She was evidently very delicate, and suffered from a disease of the heart, which made her often totally incapacitated for any exertion. She received Clara with much pleasure, regretting the loss she should feel when she was gone ; and said how much she should look forward to their meeting again.

"I can assure you I shall be most truly glad to come back here. I am thankful to say it is not the season in town now, or I should go with fear and trembling—it is so difficult to keep entirely separate from the world. I am not fond of gaiety ; but still people do misjudge so much when they see any one standing aloof from what they call pleasure ; and I do not like people to suppose I do it because I think myself better than they—for I do believe there are so many who, if they had but a friendly voice to warn them, would soon give up all these things, whereas I have learned better, and never had any inclination—so that it is no sacrifice to me as to many," said Clara.

"Well, I hope there are many who may find out their danger as I did, ere it is too late," said her friend.

"You will look after little Ellen while I am gone, please. I had intended having her with me for a time, now that papa is better ; but our proposed journey prevents it at present. I shall call to wish her good-bye before I go. I think the woman she is with seems very kind to her."

"Yes, I can quite trust her ; and we intend having her here a few days, if you have no objection. Henry is so

fond of children ; and he loves Ellen so very much, and takes such an interest in teaching her."

"I am so glad to hear you will have her a little while ; and now, I have a favour to ask of you. We are friends, I trust, and as such let there be no formality between us. Will you call *me* Clara ? I do not like Miss Howard from you," and Clara smiled kindly.

"I like Mrs Neville still less, I can assure you ; but will you not think I take too great a liberty when you hear me call you Clara ?"

"I do not know what you mean by a liberty. You are the dearest friend I have in the world. How can there be any difference between us ?"

"Thank you then, dear Clara. May God bless you, and bring you safely home again ! Then, shall I write to you ?"

"If you please, and as often as you can ; and tell me how everything goes on in the village—I shall be so interested to hear all."

"I will certainly," and again Clara pressed her lips to her friend's cheek, and departed.

Mr Langford accompanied them to the gate, and expressed the pleasure he should feel when they returned ; and they proceeded to the house where Ellen Ward had been staying since her mother's death.

"What a very pleasant man that Mr Langford is ! Really, when you first left me with him, I quite dreaded the interview ; but he made himself so agreeable I was surprised, considering how he lives away from the world. I discovered I knew something of a cousin of his ; we were schoolfellows," said Claude, as they proceeded.

"Indeed! and what sort of person was he?" inquired Clara.

"Very nice fellow, very—rather grave. I remember now, Mr Langford was the relation he spoke to me once about. He was to have had a very large property; but by some freak of fortune, it was all lost ere he had had any enjoyment from it."

Clara now remembered how Mr Langford had mentioned to her how mercifully God sometimes takes riches away, lest our hearts should be too much set upon the enjoyment of them. She little thought then how much he could speak from experience.

"How did he lose it, do you know?"

"I have really forgotten the circumstances of the case. He has not taken it much to heart, however; for when he found I knew something about it, he spoke so cheerfully, and seemed so thankful to be without it—the responsibility must have been so great, he said—I confess I was surprised. Very different to my own feelings."

"I think he is very wise. Riches do often bring much care, I believe," replied Clara, as they stopped at the door of the cottage.

Little Ellen was a pretty, fair child; and the deep mourning in which she was dressed gave her a still greater interest. She hid her face in Clara's lap, and asked piteously to be allowed to go to her mother.

"If you are good, Ellie, God will send for you when He thinks fit. Now, you will try to be a good girl; and then, when I come home, I will send for you to be with me, and play in the pretty garden you saw. You will like that, shall you not?"

"Yes, I'll like to be with you, lady ; but if Jesus sends for me to go to him, you'll let me, please ?"

"Yes, yes ; certainly you shall," replied Miss Howard, hastily brushing away a tear from her eye.

"Now, I must go. You will not forget me, Ellie ?"

"No, dear lady, you are so kind. Come back soon—I do want you so much."

"Yes, I will. Now, good-bye," and kissing the little girl affectionately, they left the house. Clara had seldom felt a sensation so pleasant as the love of that little child gave to her heart.

Claude looked grave, and at length said—"What a pretty little child ! Do you think she really understands anything about going to heaven, or Jesus Christ ; or is it only a vague idea ?"

"It is real. I am quite surprised myself to see how well she comprehends the truths of the gospel."

"She is a little *protégée* of yours, cousin, I think."

"Yes, I suppose she will be considered as such ; though I regard her in the light of a little friend, rather than as one dependent upon me."

The following day, the Howards left Wilmington for London ; and they arrived there in less time than when they left it for Beech-hall. They had yielded to the persuasions of the Hamiltons to pass the time they were to spend in town with them. Once more Kate and Clara met in different circumstances to when they had parted. Clara sought for peace, and had found the path that led to it ; and though one grief had passed over her head, she knew it was all well, and would not desire to recall the

sacrifice she had made, knowing her happiness in reality could not be affected by it. Kate's affections had been blighted; but now the bright, happy smile that played upon her face—the light, dancing step, and beaming eye—spoke of joy that was in her heart. They found Mrs Hamilton much better; and Kate and Clara had the satisfaction of seating themselves in the latter's dressing-room, for a long chat, before they retired to rest.

"And how are all my London acquaintances? Pray tell me all you know about them. Of course, few are in town at present; but you have opportunities of hearing news which I have not," said Clara.

"Well, who shall I begin with?"

"Begin with the Earl and Countess of Harrington, Lady Frances, and then proceed to Lord Cleveland; for a little bird has whispered to me that a certain cousin of mine has ——"

"Oh! who told you?—I cannot conceive. What have you heard?" burst from Kate's lips, while the rich blush mounted to her cheek.

"I have not heard anything positively; but a hint was thrown out by my aunt, that there will be a Lady Cleveland soon."

"Mamma should not have told you. I wanted to do it all myself. However, you have heard right—I am indeed——" She blushed, hesitated, and covered her face with her hands.

"Well, I cannot tell you anything that would give me so much pleasure, Katie. Did I not prophesy that you were the most suitable person for his wife? Oh, I *am so glad!*" Clara said, throwing her arms round her cousin's

neck ; and then came a long conversation connected with the intended marriage, which need not be repeated here. As Kate rose to return to her own room, Clara said, " Well, I have not heard yet what Lady Frances thinks of this ? "

" Oh ! she does not like it at all ; but as Charles has brought Lord and Lady Harrington to consent, of course she cannot do us any harm. And now, I have never told you, Clara, about all the other people—I must leave it for to-morrow. But Lord Wentworth—Clara, the world says you have broken his heart. He has gone away to some outlandish place he has in the Highlands, and nobody hears anything of him now."

" What right has any one either to say or suppose such a thing of me ? How dare people connect our names together at all, or in such a manner ? " exclaimed Clara, indignant that such a report should have gained ground."

" I say so ; but people are so unkind," said Kate.

" They must be," was the sad reply, as her cousin departed.

Many invitations came from the different families with whom the Howards used to visit, and who had their residences near town ; but Clara declined all where she knew she should be in any danger of being led into gaiety. Some pitied, many laughed, and a few remonstrated with her on the folly of not conforming to the world, but they found her firm in her resolution. Notwithstanding her having changed so much, as many thought, to her own unhappiness, it could not but be noticed that her face now did not wear that look of internal sorrow which it once had done. She had found

it was but "the sorrow of the world," of which she had seen the hollowness. She had now found a better, higher, holier path ; for "in the way of righteousness there is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death." Yes ! so had Clara proved it. Gradually the dark clouds had broken, and the Sun of Righteousness had arisen with healing in his wings ; the shadows of care were vanishing, for "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever." That peace, none can take away—it abideth strong and firm. When the waves of sorrow shall pass over it, the house cannot fall, for it is founded upon a rock. Clara took every opportunity of reasoning with Kate during her stay, and trying to lead her to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life everlasting. Kate listened, and tried to like it, because her cousin spoke ; but she was an example of one who was wedded to the world, and who, in the prospect of increased happiness, forgot Him who giveth all things richly to enjoy. Too much happiness often tends to wean the heart from God. Some are not so ready to cling to Christ as when in affliction. How necessary it is earnestly to watch, lest, in the enjoyment of the good things of this life, we should lose sight of those better things which are in heaven !

They spent nearly a month in London, and it was the latter end of October before they returned to Beech-hall. Clara no longer cared to express the delight she felt in the prospect of seeing her home again, for her father had learned to love it as much as she did, and was as glad to be back again ; and Kate, who accompanied them, as she leaned back indolently in the carriage, closed her eyes,

and gave way to a dream of happiness, at the prospect of being with her cousin, and of seeing Lord Cleveland, who was to come to Wilmington in a short time. With what delight did Clara watch for the first glimpse of the Hall, calling for her cousin's admiration of it. Though autumn had come, and was passing away, the garden looked very lovely. Every one seemed very much delighted to see them back, and Clara was as merry as a child, flitting about here and there to shew Kate everything. Then it was that Miss Hamilton thought her cousin's notions were not so *very* singular in liking the country so much. Happy Clara ! enjoy it all while you may, ere the storms gather. Wait still upon One who is able and willing to support you through the waters of affliction. Next day, little Ellen came, and formed a pleasant object of amusement to Kate, and pleasure to her cousin, who found her gentle and affectionate. Clara kept her generally with her, and soon the little girl had endeared herself much to Clara's heart. She loved to sit with her in her boudoir, when Lord Cleveland and Kate were riding or walking together ; and sometimes through the little gate would glide the slender form of Mrs Neville, to sit an hour with her friend ; and occasionally, but not so often now, the clergyman himself would come, and little Ellen would run to meet him, and he would take her on his knee, and tell her stories from the Bible, and teach her, in his own kind way, of the beautiful and better land where her mother was gone, and of the Saviour who invited little children to come to him—and Clara would listen too, and be taught even with the little child. Thus weeks sped on, and Kate's visit was over, and she was obliged to

return to make preparations for her approaching marriage, which was to take place the following February. It was now winter, but not a severe one, and Sir Edward bore the change much better than he had anticipated, and Clara found she had more leisure for those deeds of usefulness she had so often longed to undertake. One day she went with her friend to see some rewards given to the village-school children, and was so pleased by their behaviour, that she persuaded Sir Edward to give them a feast in the large hall; and afterwards various games were played for their amusement, in which Clara, Mrs Neville, and Mr Langford joined. Little Ellen had fallen asleep, wearied with her play, by Miss Howard's side, before the rest of the children were dismissed; and Clara was stooping to raise her, when Mr Langford prevented her by gently taking her in his arms.

" 'He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom.' Sweet promise! I never see a little child without thinking how the Saviour loved children," he said, as he gazed on the little sleeping face of the infant.

" You will perhaps think me weak, but I grow less and less willing to part with her."

" I do not wonder—nor do I advise it so much now. She is hardly strong enough to be sent to school; and I think the love of Christ is too strongly rooted in her heart to be spoiled by all the favour you have shewn her."

" I often wish I could be like her—as simple and teachable. I am so glad you think I need not send her away!"

Mr Langford looked at the sweet, mild face of Miss

Howard for a moment, as she bent to kiss the little girl he still held in his arms, and thought truly she *was* as meek and teachable as that little child ; but he said nothing more, but silently followed her, while she called her maid, who carried the little child to bed. When they returned, the parting hymn was sung, and the children separated, all highly delighted with their treat.

" This is such joy to me, dear Emily ! " said the sweet voice of Clara, as, with Mr Langford, they stood together after the children had departed.

" Yes. ' To do good and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, ' " replied Mrs Neville.

" We cannot fail to have pleasure in what we know pleases God, " added Mr Langford.

" I want to ask a great favour of you, " said Clara, turning to the clergyman, and blushing.

" Miss Howard knows what pleasure it will give me to do anything for her. "

" Would you—dare you trust me to teach a few little girls in the Sunday-school ? I will do my best to instruct them, and it would be such a pleasure ! "

Oh, that bright smile of Mr Langford's ! it came from his heart—joy that she had not grown weary in well-doing.

" Indeed, I shall be only too happy. I know you have found your Saviour precious to yourself, and I doubt not you will the more earnestly try to induce others to come to him. I cannot tell you how very happy you have made me by this proposal. I will give you a few very little children first, and then older, when you shall like the change. "

"I decidedly prefer teaching the very little ones. Perhaps it requires more patience ; but they are easier to manage, I think."

* * * * *

The next Sunday, as proposed, Miss Howard, accompanied by little Ellen, set out for the Sunday-school. It was a fine frosty morning in the beginning of December, and Clara had seldom felt so light and happy as she walked along. When she arrived, she found Mr Langford ready to receive her. After a hymn had been sung, and a prayer read, he led her up to a small class, composed of about four or five little girls, from four to six years old.

"Now, Miss Howard, these little children are very ignorant. This is only their first Sunday at school. They do not live in the village, and two have only lately come to reside in this neighbourhood. I do not know whether you would like to begin at the very beginning with them, or take another class of children the same age who do know something about the first rudiments of religion ?"

"I will take these, and begin from the beginning ; and then you will be better able to judge whether I am fit to teach or not."

"I have no doubt of that ; but do just as you like," said Mr Langford.

So Clara took her seat, and drew the children round her. The little things hung down their heads and peeped at one another, wonderingly. One bit her glove, another played with her bonnet-strings, a third whispered, another pointed at Miss Howard's dress, while the fifth began to console herself by eating an apple when Clara did not

observe her. "Now, you must try to be very attentive while I ask you something. Do you know who made you?" she inquired of the first child. The girl pulled her companion's frock, and looked frightened. Clara having paused as long as she thought proper, applied to the next, who said she did not know, and so on until she was obliged to appeal to little Ellen to tell them. When they saw her answering without fear, they seemed more courageous; and to the question, "God also made this great world we live in, and can you tell me what He made it of?" one replied, "Of wood."

"No. Try again."

"Of stones," said another.

"No. Does no one know this?"

A bright idea seemed to have struck a little laughing girl, and she said—"Of dust."

"No. God made it out of nothing. Now, will you all try to remember this? God is so great and wonderful, that He made all this beautiful world from nothing."

The amazement of the children was indescribable—they could not understand it; and pressed eagerly forward to listen, while Miss Howard endeavoured, as simply as possible, to tell them about the creation of the world, the introduction of light and air, the separation of land and water, and the springing up of all the ready-made trees, &c.

"Now, after God had made all these things, what did He make, Ellen?" she inquired, feeling sure the children did not know.

"He made man," replied the child.

"Quite right. Now, can any one tell me who was the first man?"

"I know!" exclaimed the same bright little girl, pressing eagerly forward again. "It was Eve."

"No. Eve was the first *woman*. Now, if I tell you who was the first man, will you try to remember?"

"Yes," all replied.

"Adam. Now, who was it?"

"Adam," repeated the children.

Then Clara proceeded to explain to them how Adam and Eve had been put into a beautiful garden, but had been told not to eat the fruit of a certain tree; and how they had disobeyed, and brought sin into the world, and death; and how God had promised to send His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die upon the cross to save those who trust in him; and then, to see whether they were attending, she asked—"How many Sons has God?"

"Twelve."

"No. You have not been listening to me, I fear."

"I know, please, ma'am."

"And who were they?" asked Clara.

"Adam and Eve."

"No, Jane. Eve was a woman," said another.

"Now, I told you a few moments ago that it was God's only-begotten Son who came down to die upon the cross for us poor sinners. Now, does any one remember his name?"

Various names were suggested, as "Isaac," or "Jacob"—which they had probably heard mentioned as being in the Bible—and little Ellen had again to set them right, after which Clara endeavoured to shew them it was wrong to be so inattentive; and then the schoolmaster gave out it was time to go to church.

"Well, how have you managed, Miss Howard?" asked Mr Langford, coming to her side, as she left the school when the children had departed.

"I find them more ignorant than I could have imagined. None of them knew who made them."

"That is just a proof of the necessity of repeating the same thing over and over again; for I told them that myself, and who were the first man and woman, before you came into the school-room."

"Did you really? Why, I put the same question, and was told the first man was Eve."

"Well, you see they had remembered the name of some one I had told them, though not as they should have done. It is, indeed, a work of much patience. I hope you will not permit yourself to be discouraged?"

"No. I should be foolish, indeed, were I to despair so soon," replied Clara, as they entered the churchyard together.

She was much pleased to see her father alighting from his carriage at the church door. She was half afraid he would not have come, the cold was so trying to him; but she had much reason now to hope he was not glad to form any excuse for absenting himself from the house of God. He did not speak very much of his own feelings; but he often sent for Mr Langford and conversed with him, Clara knew, though what passed she did not like to inquire. Sir Edward could not bear to lead her to suppose he was a Christian, until his mind had fully received all the truths of religion; and when any doubt or fear arose, he would never cast a shadow of it upon his daughter, fearful of disturbing that sweet peace of mind, unruffled by any

disbelief, which he knew she enjoyed. But it was sweet, unspeakably sweet, to her to see him seated beside her in the house of prayer, joining heartily in the service, and listening with interest to the words of affectionate warning given by their excellent pastor, who never failed to preach Christ and him crucified in all his sermons, and to direct his hearers at once to him as the only Saviour of sinners.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Sweet babe ! she glanced into our world to see
A sample of our misery ;
Then turn'd away her languid eye
To drop a tear or two, and die.
Sweet babe ! she tasted of life's bitter cup,
Refused to drink the potion up ;
But turn'd her little head aside,
Disgusted with the taste, and died.
Sweet babe ! she listen'd for a while to hear
Our mortal griefs, then turn'd her ear
To angels' harps and songs, and cried
To join their notes celestial—sigh'd, and died."

CUNNINGHAM.

CLARA had been thinking deeply a few days afterwards, when little Ellen, who had been playing in the garden, came in, and, laying her little head on Miss Howard's lap, said, wearily, "I like this place ; but I wish Jesus would come and take me to his house."

"Why, Ellie, are you unhappy here?" said Clara, kindly, taking her little friend on her knee.

"Not unhappy with you ; but there is no pain in heaven !" and a sigh, deep and long, came from the child's heart.

"And have you pain now ? Where is it ?"

"In my head—it aches so."

Clara pressed her hand upon the child's forehead, and

felt how burning hot it was. "I am very sorry, dear. We must try to make it better. When did it come on?"

"Only a little while ago; but don't make it well, though it does hurt. Perhaps Jesus has sent it to make me die, and he would not like you to make it better."

"Yes, dear, we must all try to be made better when we are ill; and then, if God does not wish us to be made well, He will not let medicine do us good—so you will try to be a dear child, and take something to make you better."

"Yes; if you wish it, I will. Please, may I lie down near you?"

"Yes;" and Clara laid her gently on the couch where she was sitting; then she rung to send for the surgeon. Fearful of her little friend's being very unwell, she told the man to hasten. "I will come back to you soon, dear," she said, as she ran to beg her father to excuse her coming to read to him, as Ellen seemed very unwell.

Sir Edward followed her to the room to see the child, for she had endeared herself to his heart by her sweet disposition and gentleness.

Clara was startled when Ellen turned her little face round, and looked at her almost vacantly.

"I fear she will have a fit," said Sir Edward, in a low voice. "Have you sent for the doctor?"

"Yes; but, oh! send again—please do," she exclaimed, kneeling down by the couch. "Ellie, do you not know me, darling?"

"Yes—it's Miss Howard," she said.

"Does your head hurt very much now?"

"No—I don't know what—I can't see. I think I am going to Jesus—I feel like it."

"And will you leave me, Ellie?" said Clara, the tears fast springing into her eyes.

The child tried to raise her hand to put it in Miss Howard's. Clara stooped and kissed the burning little cheek. "It's a better place than this; Mr Langford said so when mother went; but you will come, too—won't you?"

"Yes, when Jesus sends for me."

"I shall want to see you so," she murmured, and then Clara saw she was insensible. A convulsion passed over her face.

The door opened, and the servant entered, announcing Mrs Neville.

"Oh, Emily, I am so glad you are come! What must I do?"

"Lose not a moment," exclaimed Mrs Neville, hastily assisting her friend to have the child placed in warm water. "Oh, when will the doctor come?" she asked repeatedly, as nearly an hour passed, and messenger after messenger was despatched to seek him, for he was not at home when Miss Howard had sent.

"Do you think she will die, Emily? Oh, tell me!"

"God only knows; but, dear Clara, remember, should she be taken away, how much evil she may escape hereafter. I have so often felt that, since I lost my own dear child."

"But it seems hard to lose her."

"But God only lent her to you. Surely the Father has a right to claim His child. But while there is life, there is hope. We can only wait patiently."

At length, the surgeon came. "You have done what you could," he said, with the calmness of a professional man.

"Is there no hope?" Clara said, mournfully.

"I would not say that; but I fear there is not much chance left."

Another hour they watched, and still no change: then the doctor gave up hope. "It will soon be over now: better lay her down," he said.

Clara took her in her own arms, and gently laid her on the couch, and knelt beside her. The convulsions were not now so violent, but she seemed fast sinking away. Almost sleeping, utterly unconscious of all around her, a blackness seemed stealing under the once bright blue eye; the lips grew changed too; every moment the breathing was more irregular, the pulse slower. Clara's tears flowed faster.

"Does she suffer, do you think?" inquired Mrs Neville of the surgeon.

"Not the least: she is perfectly unconscious to any feeling."

"That, at least, is a comfort, dear Clara," said her friend, gently pressing her hand.

After a little while, a perfect silence reigned around, interrupted only at intervals by a low sob: the little spirit had returned to God, who gave it, and Clara knelt beside the dead body of her little friend. She had gone to be with her mother in that better country, where there is no more pain or sorrow. It was a sharp trial to Clara: this was the first loved one she had known well who had gone. The child was very dear to her: she had learned

many lessons from her infant voice, when she innocently told of her faith and love to her Saviour. But darker clouds hovered over the future. Still patiently must she abide, waiting, hoping, trusting, submitting—ever leaning on the arm of her Beloved, there to find support through all. Mrs Neville was now oftener than ever with her. She was sometimes very lonely—for Sir Edward, as the winter wore on, seemed to feel the cold more acutely, and seldom left the warm fire in his own dressing-room for the colder rooms below ; and fearful of the heat of his own apartment being too much for Clara, he would not permit her to devote herself entirely to him, as she was wishful to do. And thus the next two months wore on. Clara was now an established believer. She had learned to know her heavenly Father. How different were her present feelings to what they were a year ago, when she had made her first appearance in the fashionable world ! How worthless did all earth's pleasures seem, compared with the joy she had found in seeking after the true riches ! Oftener than ever now did Mr Langford come to see her father, though she did not see him so often herself. A great change had taken place in Sir Edward. No opportunity was passed of doing good, and of trying to induce others to do so. The Word of God was his study and delight, publicly and privately : the Sabbath was esteemed a delight, though now, alas ! he seldom dared go to the house of prayer. What would he not have given to recall some of those sweet seasons of rest which once had been passed in worldly conversations or reading ; but they were gone, never to return, and Sir Edward mourned over them, and longed to be able to re-spend his life.

How different would it now be ! Clara rejoiced over all this : her father and she now loved the same Saviour—together they walked in the same path—together, whenever it was possible, they knelt at the table of their Lord, or joined in prayer in His house—together they could converse of that better land where, with the eye of faith, Sir Edward could see the wife he had so long mourned as dead ; while Clara no longer sighed to think her mother had been taken away from her so young, when she knew that she had safely passed through the waves of this troublesome world, and escaped all its care and sorrow. She felt how she could look forward to meeting her, now that she had found her heavenly Father. But though all this change had been wrought in her and her remaining parent, yet she felt often a painful foreboding creep over her about her father, that though his inward man was renewed day by day, yet the outward man was decaying ; his step was more feeble, he was sooner tired, and now seldom left his room, except for an hour or two in the day. Yet his cheerfulness never left him. Nothing seemed to move him, save sometimes he would look earnestly on his child ; then his lip would quiver, and often a tear would start to his eye, which, if he saw she noticed, made him more cautious in restraining any emotion. Kate Hamilton's marriage was fixed to take place the end of February, and Clara was to be one of the bridesmaids ; but she felt so little inclined to leave her father, that she determined to entreat him to permit her to remain with him. She was sitting at his feet one morning, after reading to him, when, raising her eyes, she met his fixed upon her in intense affection.

"Papa, dear papa, will you grant me a great favour?"

"Anything, my darling, that is in my power," he said, gently stroking back the soft hair.

"Will you let me stay with you, instead of going to London? I would so much rather."

"No, Clara, dear, I cannot grant all that. Be with me you shall; but you must go to London—I must go myself." He said the last words in a low, sad tone.

"You must go! dear papa," said Clara, in amazement. "How can you bear the journey?"

"I must endeavour to do so. I want to see Dr Williamson and some others. Do not be alarmed, my darling. I trust there is no real cause; but it will be a satisfaction to have their opinion."

"But why cannot they come here? Oh, do not run the risk of injuring yourself, dearest papa!"

"No, I will not do that; but I prefer going to London. I can better settle other business at the same time. And then we will come back here to this sweet, quiet place, and be at rest."

"Be at rest!"—Somehow the words startled Clara, and made a thrill of fear pass over her frame. Sir Edward felt her hand tremble.

"My child, what is the matter with you?"

Clara dared not trust her voice to speak for a moment, and then said—"I do not know exactly. I think I am rather nervous."

"And was it anything I said made you so, my darling?"

"I was afraid you felt worse again, dear papa."

"Well, and if I did, why should my Clara fear? Am

I not in the hands of Him who doeth all things well ; and if it should please Him to make me worse, would my child repine—would it not all be right ?”

“ Yes, I know it would be ; but it seems hard for you to suffer.”

“ But, my darling, I do not suffer much. Though I feel weaker, I have no pain. Ought we not to be thankful for that ?”

A faint murmured “ Yes ” was the only reply.

“ Well, then, ‘ let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,’ ” continued Sir Edward. “ Try not to give way to nervous fears. Remember, Clara, if it should even please God to call me away, He would not leave you comfortless—*He* would be your father.”

This was the first time Sir Edward had even hinted at the possibility of such a thing as death being near. Clara’s heart sunk within her. She leaned her head on her father’s knee, and silently but freely the tears poured down her cheeks. Then, when she grew calmer, he gently spoke again to her, beseeching her not to let what he had said dwell upon her mind ; and gradually led to more cheerful subjects, until the peace of her mind seemed restored. Sir Edward had not spoken unnecessarily. For some months, he had been aware the disease was gaining ground with which he had been afflicted so many years. Unknown to his daughter, he had seen and consulted an eminent physician, who had declared it his opinion there was little or no hope. He might remain in England now with as much benefit as if he again went abroad. And Sir Edward was only too thankful for the privilege of spending his last days in his own

country. Daily he felt growing weaker ; yet ever fearful of alarming his child, he had borne up while with her. Yet as the opportunity occurred, he vaguely alluded to the possibility of his death, earnestly desiring, should he be suddenly removed, the shock might not altogether come upon her unawares. He felt anxious she should be present at her cousin's marriage, as he believed it might be the last pleasure she would enjoy for many a long day. And also having much important business to transact, he remained firm in his determination of going to London.

* * * * *

A week more and the travellers arrived in town, at the house of Mr Hamilton, where all was gaiety and pleasurable excitement — Kate all smiles, Mrs Hamilton full of preparation, and her husband far more amiable than Miss Howard had ever seen him before. Claude, too, though not so much engrossed by the coming event, was yet evidently in good spirits, and already much more inclined to submit himself to his father. In this round of excitement, Clara was never left to herself ; so that gloomy thoughts had not for the time power to make her unhappy. Her opinion was constantly required, either by Kate, her aunt, or one of her younger cousins, whose delight at being freed from the school-room was hardly to be restrained.

" Will you not go to the Opera to-night, Clara ? Do ! " exclaimed Kate, the Saturday evening of the week before her marriage.

" No, thank you, Kate, I would rather not. "

" And why, dear coz ? You have taken up such absurd

notions! If ever I meet Mr Langford again, I declare I will tell him he has ruined your happiness for life."

"No, dear Kate, you will not. Mr Langford has been a true friend to me. It is not he who has said I am not to love the world—it is my Bible that tells me that."

"But, Clara, what possible objection can you have to the Opera—such a harmless amusement? I suppose you think me very wicked for going to it? Now, confess!"

"Far may it ever be from me, my dear Kate, to judge any one. I could not myself attend the Opera for many reasons which may never have struck you."

"No—I don't profess to be religious. I know I am no saint. I am perfectly aware what *you* think of me," said Kate, a little piqued.

"You have quite mistaken me," said Clara, mildly. "I did not mean to make myself any better than you. But, perhaps, if you would let me tell you my reasons for not approving of this gaiety, you might not think so differently yourself."

"Well, I should like to hear your reasons; but it would be vain to try to convince me."

Clara smiled a little.

"Say rather to make you give up such things, coz. You might be convinced, but yet unwilling to forego your pleasure."

"And do you never regret giving up all this yourself, Clara?"

"The Opera alone I have found difficult to give up—I am so fond of music. And where do you hear it in such perfection as there? But I am so firmly persuaded I should be wrong in attending it, that I must certainly

deny myself the pleasure of joining any more parties there."

"And now for your reasons."

"Well, first, what time will you return from it?"

"Oh, about one or two o'clock, I suppose."

"And what day will have begun then?"

"Sunday morning, you mean; but I still consider it Saturday night."

"So *you* may; but I doubt whether God would not regard it as the commencement of His own day."

"Well, suppose it ~~was~~, what then?"

"Why, how do you generally feel when you return?"

"Oh, full of what I have seen; generally very sleepy; and then I dream all over again."

"Just so; instead of preparing your mind for the Sabbath, you dream until noon very likely?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, there is no time to attend morning service, so one part of the day is lost, and thus you have robbed God of a portion of that time which He has appointed for His service. You may go in the afternoon or evening to church; but still you have missed the best and longest service of the day."

"Well, so I may; but then the Opera is on other nights besides Saturday — *then* I am not losing any of Sunday."

"Well, but you lose *some* time; and for every idle moment you spend, God will make you account for it at the last day. The hours that should have been spent in rest are improperly employed, while those in which you ought to be up and doing something useful are spent in sleep."

"I think you take a very serious view of these things, Clara—too serious for your own happiness."

"No, Kate; I have more satisfaction in leaving the world than I ever had in joining it. And now for my second reason, for I must not tire your patience. Now, suppose you knew that this night our Lord should come, is the Opera a place you would wish to be found in, should that event come upon you, as it undoubtedly will on some, unawares?"

"Certainly I should not like to be there then."

"I put it, too, in another light. If this night you were to die, would you like to die there?"

"No, of course not."

"Well, then, Kate, dear, how do you know that neither of these two events will happen while you *are* there?"

"Oh, because so unlikely. It is quite an absurd idea, Clara, and very far-fetched, I think."

"You are not too young to die, Kate; and our Lord says, 'In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh,' and he tells us all to 'watch.' Now, do you not think, dear cousin, we ought always to live as we should wish to be doing when we come to die? We ought always to be ready. Remember the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: those who had no oil in their lamps thought they could borrow of those who had—but when the time came, there was none for them. We cannot become righteous just when we choose, as many think possible; but take care lest the door of mercy be closed against *you*, ere you have time to repent. No excuse can then avail. Will you not, my dear Kate, think seriously on these all-important subjects?"

"Well—but, Clara, all this is very striking, but you know there are very few places we should like to be in, under the circumstances you mention ; and you have not yet proved to me that the Opera is one of the most sinful. Why should it be any worse than a concert?"

"Because, I fear, the familiarity that must necessarily exist between the actors will, in many instances, have a tendency to immorality. I do not wish to judge people ; but I hardly see how it is possible for an actor to be a Christian. Is it, therefore, right to encourage anything that tends to sin?"

"But, my dear Clara, you do not suppose that my staying away would put down the Opera?" said Kate, laughing a little satirically.

"Certainly not ; but for all that, you need not follow the multitude to do evil ; and *individually* I believe we shall be held responsible for the encouragement of sin, though it may not be in *our* power to prevent others from committing it."

"I see your meaning ; but I maintain poor little Kate Hamilton's influence would not go far, even were I of your mind."

"But Lady Cleveland's might go still further ; and if you absented yourself from the Opera, it would be observed and commented upon. The reason would be asked. You could give it. Some, undoubtedly, would laugh at you, but others might be made to think seriously ; and who knows what good you might do?"

"Well, perhaps I might. I remember Lady Lavington asked me, the other day, why you were not at the ball? I said, I believed religious scruples were in your way. She

laughed ; but said she was curious to know what possible objection you could find to so harmless an amusement. I said, I had not inquired ; so, perhaps, if you could tell her, she might be convinced."

"I do not provoke controversy on these points, Kate. I trust I may always be ready to give a good reason for everything I do, when it is asked ; otherwise it would be painful to my feelings to be obtruding my views on every one. And now," added Clara, affectionately, "there is one more reason I must give you, and the greatest,—I consider the Bible forbids our attending such places."

"How can you make that out ? St Paul, I know, did not attend the Opera, most likely because there was not one in his day ; but you know he wanted to go into the theatre, but was prevented by the disciples—I mean that passage in the Acts about Demetrius," said Kate, smiling.

"Yes, I know what you mean ; but how can you make a jest of such a thing ? You know the theatre was then used as a place of public assembly for various things, and you are aware how St Paul would have entered in to speak to the people at the risk of his own life, to try to lead them from idolatry. Oh ! take care, Kate, how you, even in jest, wrest Scripture."

"I meant no harm. I only wanted to see whether you remembered the circumstance," said Kate, blushing at her cousin's mild reproof.

"Now, I must give you my other reason. What are the meaning of these passages?—'Be not conformed to this world' (Romans xii. 2) ; and 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that

is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 John ii. 15-17); and 'The friendship of the world is enmity with God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God' (James iv. 4). Oh, dear Kate, what an awful thing to be the enemy of God! We cannot serve God and mammon; and you know, in your baptism, you have promised manfully to fight under *His* banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto your life's end. Can you refuse to give up a few hours of pleasure for One who has done so much for you? What can be meant by the world but vain, foolish pleasures, and worldly society? All that is not of God is sin. Will you not, dearest Kate, now, more especially at this time when you are so soon going to take such solemn vows upon you, try to think on these things?"

Clara passed her arm affectionately round her cousin's waist, while Kate could almost have admitted she was persuaded to be a Christian.

"Some time—yes, some time I will, indeed, Clara," she said, rising, and hastily dashing away her tears, as her mother's voice was heard telling her it was time to prepare for the Opera. "Not to-night—I cannot to-night. Charles will be there; and I promised him," she added, faintly, as she tried to escape from her cousin.

"Well, good-bye, then, dear Kate; but I shall pray for you, that, if not now, when you have fully drained the cup of worldly pleasure, and found how bitter it is, you

may think on these things, and be led to see how vain is all this world can give—how precious, how inestimably precious, it is to have loved and followed Christ ; and may the lamp of divine truth shine into your heart, and lead you to the only Rest !” she said ; and Kate was gone,

The sigh that escaped Miss Howard, as she saw her pretty little cousin enter the carriage that night, was for her, not for herself, that her heart should be so much set on worldly things, and so little able to enter into the blessedness of the believer.

A few days more, and Clara stood by the altar, and saw her former lover bestow his hand upon her cousin, who was so much better suited to make a gay, lively disposition, like his own, happy. After-years proved this, in the devoted affection Lord and Lady Cleveland always felt for one another. Both Sir Edward and his daughter's presents were really magnificent ; and the bride's eyes sparkled at the brilliant gems presented to her eyes, as the jewels were placed in her dressing-case, as she prepared for her journey.

“ Now, Clara, you will mind and write to me. I shall think of you very often,” she said, when adieux were being exchanged.

“ Yes, indeed I will, with pleasure ; and do not forget the Beech-hall visit, which you have promised among your numerous engagements.”

“ No, indeed, I shall not ; and a dreadful controversy will be held with Mr Langford about the Opera. Do not become a complete recluse before I return,” Kate said, with her merry laugh.

“ I love the path of usefulness too well ever to be con-

vinced I am wrong, Kate. Good-bye, dearest, and may every blessing attend you, is my most sincere wish!" replied Clara, as she clasped her cousin in her arms.

"Good-bye, all!" said Lady Cleveland, waving her hand from the carriage, 'mid the smiles and tears of those she left behind.

"We shall miss her merry voice very much," said Mrs Hamilton, when they turned to go into Kate's empty room.

"She certainly kept us all alive," said Claude. "Well, no matter—all girls will get married. There is no help but to make the best of it. Surely it will be your turn next, Clara?"

"Say yours rather, sir," said Clara, smiling.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set; but all—
Thou hast *all* seasons for thine own, O Death!"

HEMANS.

"The churchyard bears an added stone,
The fireside shews a vacant chair;
Here Sadness dwells, and weeps alone,
And Death displays his banners there:
The life has gone, the breath has fled,
And what *has* been no more shall be;
The well-known form, the welcome tread,
Oh! where are they, and where is he?"

NEELE.

"We shall return home on Thursday, my dear, if you can possibly be ready. I should not like to miss another Sunday at dear Wilmington," said Sir Edward, the morning after Kate's wedding. The physician had just taken his departure, and Clara had entered, pale, but calm, knowing that were her father to see how anxious she felt, he would only be the more cautious to hide anything unfavourable that might have been said.

"I *can* be ready any hour, dear papa. What time to-morrow shall we set off? Does Dr Williamson think you well enough to bear the journey?"

"Yes, I think so," Sir Edward replied, in as cheerful a

voice as he could assume. Clara looked wistfully in his face ; he smiled. "Dearest, do not be distressed : Dr Williamson has only told me what I myself knew before I came to London—there is no *immediate* danger."

Clara knew not what to reply. The possibility of imminent danger, even at any later period, had not firmly taken possession of her mind ; she had not suffered it to be in her thoughts. Her uncle entered at this moment, and the conversation was not resumed ; for Sir Edward and Clara seemed mutually unequal to enter into any further explanations—neither could bear it. Clara returned to her own apartment, to make preparations for her journey, an altered being. A blight seemed suddenly fallen upon her happiness. She felt her father would soon be removed from her. She gave up hope. Oh, the intense agony of her mind ! But she knew how necessary it was to conceal from her father all these painful forebodings, as it would only make him miserable to see her grief. For hours before her God, she pleaded that, if it were possible, this bitter cup of earthly sorrow might be taken from her. How could she have borne to know what she then did, without the consolation of that "Friend who sticketh closer than a brother,"—Jesus, the Saviour of all who come to him ? Oh, how sweet she felt it to put her trust in him ! She rose from her knees refreshed and strengthened, calm, and able to restrain the anxious, sorrowful feeling that now must press upon her spirits, yet willing to submit in all things to that Almighty Father who knoweth what is best for His children, and who in every temptation makes a way to escape.

When they returned to Beech-hall, no persuasions could

make Clara ever leave her father, except when absolutely necessary, though he much feared the warm room he was obliged to be in might injure her health ; but he felt he could not resist her earnest pleadings. Thinking probably how soon he might be called away from her, he permitted her to remain constantly with him, and by gently soothing her troubled feelings, he tried gradually to lead her to view his approaching dissolution with the submission of a Christian, who knows all things are well, whether for life or death.

* * * * *

It was late one stormy evening about the end of March. The rain poured down in torrents, while the wind howled piteously among the old towers of Beech-hall, and the trees rocked to and fro in the park, when Mr Langford was returning through it, as a nearer way home, from a parishioner he had been visiting at some distance. As he turned to glance at the windows of the Hall, though almost blinded by the driving rain, he thought he perceived lights moving up and down, and as if some unusual commotion reigned in the house. He stood still a moment. A vague presentiment of dread seized his mind. Could anything be the matter with Sir Edward ? A moment more, and the sound of a horse's feet was heard coming rapidly down the road. Mr Langford stepped forward. The darkness prevented him distinguishing the rider.

"Who are you ?" he inquired.

"Simpson, sir. My master has been taken dangerously ill, very suddenly ; and I am going to Newington for Dr Reynolds."

The horse flew past, leaving Mr Langford hesitating as

to the course he should adopt. Then he hurried to the house, and entered the housekeeper's room.

"Oh! Mr Langford, I am so glad you are come. My poor master, and my sweet young lady! I think it will kill her. She has just sent for you to come and see Sir Edward," exclaimed the housekeeper, tears running down her cheeks.

"I will wait here, then. When you have a convenient opportunity, tell them I am here; but don't distress them by asking if I can see them. I will stay the whole night, if necessary," Mr Langford said.

While the message was being delivered, the clergyman, in deep agitation, paced the room, praying fervently for Sir Edward and his daughter. *He* had no hope. He had been made aware, by Sir Edward himself, that it was not, thought he had many months to live, but might linger if no attack like the present came on; but he knew it was hopeless to expect he could survive this. The servant soon returned with a message from Miss Howard, to say that she should like him to come immediately. Mr Langford rapidly ascended. Sir Edward was laid now perfectly quiet—the spasm had passed, and he was gently sinking away, while the cold dews of death had spread over his forehead. Clara knelt by the bed, pale as ashes, her eyes tearless, and her beautiful hair hanging in wild disorder over her face; one hand clasped her father's, while, with the other, she supported herself from falling. The surgeon stood on the other side of the bed, grave and silent, intently watching the face of the dying man. A death-like stillness reigned around as Mr Langford entered. No one spoke to him for some moments. Clara silently

extended her hand to him, which he gently pressed, and then turned to the side of the surgeon.

"He is sinking fast, but very calmly," said the surgeon to Mr Langford.

"Is he conscious?"

"I think so; but, I fear, too weak to speak."

Clara raised her head, and looked at the clergyman with the most intense suffering on her face. "Will you pray with us?" she said, at length. And Mr Langford did so, earnestly—for the dying man, that death might open to him the gate of everlasting life; and for the daughter, that faith and strength might be given her to bear this affliction with patience, and that she might entirely submit to her heavenly Father's will, and be enabled to say, "Thy will be done."

As they rose from their knees, Sir Edward slightly moved. Clara bent over him, and murmured—"My father, is Christ precious to you in this hour?"

Faint was the voice that replied—"He is all in all, my child. God bless you!"

Mr Langford took his other hand for a moment. Sir Edward seemed desirous to speak, or to move Clara's hand into the other that Mr Langford held still, but he was too weak and exhausted. His eyes closed, never to open again upon this world of care and sorrow, but to re-open on the endless beauty of that kingdom which he had lately learned to desire so ardently to see. Clara knew not that his spirit was fled, such perfect peace had been the end. No sigh—no struggle! She still held the dear hand of him she had loved so well, until it grew cold and stiff in hers; and the truth flashed upon her—she was

alone—an orphan ! Then her face blanched, as the corpse beside her. She neither moved nor spoke. Tears, the welcome channel of relief to the overburdened heart, denied their consolation. There she knelt, rigid as marble, unable to comprehend the overwhelming blow that almost deprived her of her senses.

Then it was Mr Langford approached, and kindly took her hand. He started at the icy coldness.

“Dear Miss Howard, you cannot benefit him. Think where he is now rejoicing in the presence of his Saviour, never more to suffer as you have seen him do to-night. Think of his last words—how Christ was with him,” he said.

Clara made an effort to rise, but her strength failed her.

“Had you not better go to your own room now ? You are not equal to remaining here.” He spoke in such a soothing, kind manner, that, bowing her head, she suffered him to raise her, and, with the help of her maid, to assist her to her own room.

“Shall I send Emily to you ?” he said, as she was placed on a couch.

“Oh ! if she would but come—I could have no greater comfort,” Clara said, pressing her hand to her head to still its throbbings.

“I will send her immediately ; and, oh ! dear Miss Howard, let me entreat you to ‘cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you.’ He doth not willingly afflict : try to submit to His will, though I know it is hard in your case.”

“I do. His will be done !” replied Clara, in a low voice,

as she pressed the hand of the kind friend whose gentle voice and comfort had been of such use to her. With a deeply sympathising look, that was a balm to her heart, he left her ; but when he had gone, nature gave way, and, completely exhausted, she fainted. Hour after hour passed by, and still she was unconscious. The surgeon's and physician's remedies seemed useless ; for morning dawned, and still she knew not that the kind hand of Emily Neville supported her head, and bathed her forehead. It was very long before she could speak, and then, after requesting they would send for her uncle, Mr Hamilton, she again relapsed into unconsciousness for some hours. When she came to herself again, she seemed quite unable to realise the fearful loss she had sustained ; but when the truth flashed at length upon her mind, a high fever came upon her, her senses forsook her, and constantly in her delirium she asked wildly why her father was not by her side. What a comfort was Mrs Neville during that long, tedious illness which succeeded ! How tenderly, night and day, she nursed her beloved friend ! Chiefly through her means was Clara restored ; for though Mrs Hamilton (who accompanied her husband when he came to see the remains of his brother-in-law committed to the grave) was very kind and attentive to her niece, she knew very little about attendance in a sick-room ; and, after a time, left Mrs Neville almost entirely with Clara. At length the crisis was passed, and, weak as an infant, Clara lay asleep. How changed was the beautiful face, so wan and pale ! Mrs Neville could scarcely restrain her tears when she looked upon the dearest friend she had ever had, so care-worn was the expression on her young face. At last her

eyes opened, and she knew where she was, and all that had happened, which her wanderings the last few weeks had prevented.

"Dear Emily, how kind you have been ! I knew some loving hand was near me, but could not tell whose it was. But, oh ! how changed all is ! I have had, as it were, a long dream ; but I wake to the fearful reality."

Then it was, the soft voice of Mrs Neville whispered words of peace and comfort in her ear.

"But all will be so drear without *him* ! I am alone now !"

"Not alone, dearest. Your Saviour's own words are—'I will not leave you comfortless;' or, as the margin says—'Orphans, *I* will come to you.' Try to think he is with you."

"Yes, I know it ; it is all well. The Judge of all the earth will do right. But it seems hard."

"I know it. It does seem hard ; and in our own strength we cannot bear it. You are not able to talk now, dear ; but you can lift up your heart in silent prayer, and God will hear you."

"Yes, I will," was the faint reply.

What words of comfort was Mrs Neville able, from time to time, to pour into her bereaved friend's ear, from whom no murmuring word ever escaped. It was a long time before she was able to be removed into her dressing-room. Her recovery was very slow ; but her patience so great, there never was any violent outburst of grief. Silently her tears would flow, while her hands were clasped in prayer, that in all things she might be resigned to her heavenly Father's will. It was nearly summer now. With

what joy would Clara once have looked out into the garden, while she hailed with delight the opening buds ! But all seemed wintry still to her. She would gaze from her window at the lovely scenes which met her eye—now all her own—but it had no joy for her ; for he ! where was *he* ? Years could never make up for those hours of anguish which had passed over the spring-time of her life ; but she strove against her grief, never willingly cherishing it—for she knew her beloved parent's death was gain to him, and his last words had been those of firm trust in his Saviour. As she lay on her couch one sweet summer afternoon, Mr Langford, by her own desire, came to see her, and then he told her the substance of many of the conversations he had had with her father, and how earnest he had been to know and learn the right way. And then, ere they parted, he prayed with her that this trial might be blessed to her, leading her the more fervently to cling to Christ, and him alone. He reminded her, in parting, of the words—“ As many as I *love*, I rebuke and chasten ; ” and of the reward—“ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation. ” “ Behold I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. ” “ You know, Miss Howard, the refiner never takes the gold from the furnace until he can see his own image reflected in it ; then he knows all the dross is taken away, and nothing but pure gold remains. So God sometimes places us in the furnace of affliction to try us ; then, when trials are no longer necessary, He takes us to Himself, for He sees the Saviour's image reflected in us. Thus may it be with you. In each trial may you grow more and more like your Redeemer, until you shall

attain that rest which remaineth for the people of God !” He pressed her hand kindly, and took his leave, promising he would come and tell her more of her father another time. She thanked him, and felt happier than she had ever done since her father’s death ; and sleep stealing over her, she dreamed she saw her father in everlasting glory, and he told her not to mourn for him, for he was so happy ; and when she awoke, the slender form of Emily Neville was bending over her affectionately.

“ I have had such a happy dream, Emily !” and then she told her what it was, and asked her to sing to her. Mrs Neville immediately complied, and in a sweet, clear voice, sang the following hymn :—

“ When gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark, and friends are few,
On Him I lean, who not in vain
Experienced every human pain :
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears.

“ If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom’s narrow way—
To flee the good I would pursue,
Or do the ill I would not do—
May He who felt temptation’s power,
Still guard me in the dangerous hour!

“ When mourning o’er some stone I bend,
Which covers all that was a friend,
And from his hand, his voice, his smile,
Divides me for a little while,
Then, Saviour ! mark the tears I shed,
For thou didst weep o’er Lazarus dead.

“ And, oh ! when I have safely pass’d
Through every conflict but the last,
Still, Lord, unchanging, watch beside
My dying bed, for thou hast died ;
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tear away !”

The sweet voice trembled ere the hymn was concluded, and tears came to the singer's relief.

"I know many hymns, but not one is so dear as that to me. It was my husband's favourite."

"Emily, dear Emily, you never speak of your own trials, and they have been heavier than mine. You have lost a husband and child. How have you borne their loss?"

"Not in my own strength, Clara, or I never could have survived them; but I have been wonderfully supported, and can now bless God that they were ever taken from me. I know they are happy, and, had they lived, my heart would have been set upon them too much. 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray,' but now, I trust, I have been brought nearer to heaven. I feel as if the call for me to go home would not be very far distant now, and what a joyful meeting we shall have around the throne of God in heaven!"

As the gentle widow spoke, Clara gazed upon her, and thought how fragile she looked. Could it be possible that she, too—that now dearest earthly friend—might be taken from her? Oh! she could not think of it; but Mrs Neville then made her take some refreshment, and afterwards, at her request, told her of her husband's last hours, and of all he had said to her; and this engrossed her mind, so that the painful thought was for the time forgotten.

Mr and Mrs Hamilton had returned to London as soon as their niece was out of danger, promising to come back in a few weeks, when Clara would be able to attend to business matters.

Sir Edward's title, and some of his estates, though not the Wilmington one, were entailed upon his brother, Colonel Howard, who had been in India nearly twenty years ; consequently Clara knew little or nothing of him, save what her childish imagination had pictured, when she remembered once seeing a tall gentleman talking to her father, and who, she was told, was her uncle Alfred, who had come to see them before he went out to India. Very little communication had passed between Sir Edward and his brother, though always on perfectly good terms ; so that Clara could judge little or nothing of his character from his letters. She knew he was still a bachelor, and very devoted to his profession, and this was nearly all. Mr Hamilton and Colonel (or, as we must now call him, Sir Alfred) Howard were appointed Clara's guardians, but merely nominally so ; for as much power as could be placed in her own hands was done by her affectionate father, who only imposed one injunction upon his daughter—viz., that she should make Beech-hall her home, unless she married. This was, indeed, only Clara's wish ; for there was no place on earth she loved so well. Sir Alfred Howard was not expected to arrive in England for some months, so that all the business affairs were arranged by Mr Hamilton.

It was the middle of June when Clara again ventured into her own room down-stairs. She had not seen it for nearly three months. Her health was greatly improved, but her face was still very pale, and a deep sadness on her fair brow, and melancholy in her deep blue eye, and her step had lost its elasticity ; but her manner was calm and peaceful, and no one, save the friend by her side, knew

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the depth of feeling that was in her heart for the memory of him who was gone. Her beautiful apartment, in the general appearance, was unchanged ; but it looked lonely and desolate. "One was not!" How could it be the same to her?—every book, every article of value, was *his* gift. She passed through the rooms, and entered the garden ; but though the flowers seemed to breathe a peace upon her as she passed, they could not help to fill the aching void there was in her heart ; yet she smiled, and spoke kind words to all, and they believed the painful remembrance would soon pass away and be forgotten. They little knew their young mistress. An image once loved could never be effaced from her heart ; and now her greatest comfort was in looking forward to meeting her father in heaven, where sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and where all tears are wiped from the mourner's eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

" Father of mercies, 'till the day-spring rise,
And Thy salvation glad my longing eyes—
Till doubt and fear, like 'morning shadows, flee,"
And all my griefs are lost in love of Thee;
While through this cheerless wild I faintly strive,
Hope sore depress'd, and faith but just alive—
Teach me to dread all guidance but Thy own,
And patient tread in 'paths I have not known.'
Forgive my murmurings; let thy quickening power
Support my spirits in this gloomy hour;
And when the hosts of household foes appal,
'Turn thou, beloved,' at my feeble call;
Come 'with the swiftness of the mountain roe,'
And strength, proportion'd to my wants, bestow."

MARSHOT.

MR HAMILTON arrived the same day that Clara had come down-stairs. As his time was very limited, Mrs Hamilton had not returned with him, as Clara had anticipated; and though she loved her kind, gentle aunt very much, yet her presence would not contribute to her comfort in times of sorrow. She had nothing but mere worldly consolation to bestow, which, however kindly given, cannot bring peace to the sorrowing heart; and Clara longed now for perfect quiet, that she might think and pray more than she had ever done before. Mr Hamilton was very affectionate and kind—for, independent of his worldly-minded-

ness and coldness generally, his niece was really much beloved by him, and he was grieved to see the sad alteration in her appearance.

"We must have you away to the sea-side, Clara, in a week or two; and after that, you must come and pay us a long visit in London," he said, after dinner that evening. He was surprised by the grateful though very firm negative his niece put upon this proposal. She assured him nothing would grieve her so much as having to leave Beech-hall for some time to come.

"But, my dear girl, be reasonable. Seriously, you will do yourself harm by thus indulging your grief; in such complete solitude, too, it would hardly be proper."

"But I will not give way, dear uncle; and in a month or two, perhaps, I shall be able to go to the sea-side. But, under present circumstances, to leave here would almost break my heart."

"But, my dear, though I will not urge the point, you surely would not wish to be entirely alone? I think there would be decided impropriety in it."

"Oh, yes. I did not mean to be alone; but I will tell you what I have been thinking of. My dear mother's dying wish, you know, was, that, when a child, Aunt Lydia should have the care of me. This, you know, was granted; and though I will not say that aunt was very affectionate or indulgent to me, yet I know she meant it for the best, and tried to do her duty to me. I believe she has felt slighted that we have never asked her to visit us since our return; and I cannot bear she should think me either unkind or ungrateful for her care of me when a child. What do you think of asking her to come and stay

with me for some time until Uncle Alfred arrives ! Then, some permanent arrangement will be agreed upon."

"Well, I suppose, as you seem resolute in remaining here, this is the most likely plan you can propose ; but I fear Lydia will in no way contribute to your comfort, my dear niece. Though she is my own sister, I must own she is about the most unamiable person I ever met with."

"Well, so she may be, though I trust I shall not find her so ; and you know we can have our own apartments, and only meet at pleasure, should it be agreeable to do so. I cannot forget she is my dear mother's sister, and that she loved her ; and I cannot have an unkind feeling towards her. She is very lonely, and perhaps requires many comforts which she has not ; and if I can conduce to her happiness, it will be a great pleasure to me. What else can give satisfaction to us, while in the world, than to contribute to make others comfortable ?"

"Well, it is very amiable of you to say so, and I believe you really mean it ; but if you can sweeten Lydia's disposition, you will perform a miracle I do not expect to see in my day."

"I can try, though, uncle," Clara replied, with a sweet smile. Mr Hamilton said no more on the subject, and Clara wrote to invite her aunt to be with her for the next few months. Mr Hamilton was not a little annoyed, however, at the failure of his plans. He had fully intended having his niece to reside with them for some time in London, hoping by degrees to forward his plans with regard to Claude ; while he should endeavour once more to lead his niece into the gaities she had so fully renounced in her previous visit to them. He looked upon

Mr Langford and Mrs Neville with suspicion, and was very desirous of seeing Clara away from their influence ; but her resolute determination, joined with the evident intentions of Sir Edward, in his will, that she should remain at Beech-hall, made him obliged, reluctantly, to yield. Clara, however, promised to pay them a visit when Lord and Lady Cleveland returned from abroad, where they had been residing the last few months. With this arrangement, Mr Hamilton took his departure ; and Clara was left quiet and alone for a few weeks, as Miss Hamilton's arrangements could not be made in less time, though she was only too anxious to hurry them, and once more make her home at Beech-hall. After much persuasion, Mrs Neville consented to come and spend the time with her friend ; not that it was not one of the greatest pleasures for her to do so, but both the clergyman and his sister were ever fearful of intruding themselves at the Hall—and now more especially, when Sir Edward was dead, lest they should be accused of interested motives with the young heiress. When they could afford her any help, or do anything for her, they were ever ready and willing to do so ; but when their presence was unnecessary, they never gave it. Both felt deeply for Miss Howard, and very sweet was their sympathy to her ; and their consolation had been her greatest comfort. She herself was at a loss to discover their reason for being so seldom with her. Mr Langford never came, unless by special invitation ; and Mrs Neville could hardly be persuaded to stay at Beech-hall with her friend until her aunt came ; and yet Clara knew she was equally beloved. Why, then, should there be any restraint between them ? for when with her,

their kindness was so genuine and their conversations as interesting as ever, that she determined frankly to ask Mrs Neville why she so seldom came to see her without being requested to do so. The question met with as frank a reply in return ; and Clara, though grieved such should be their motive, yet admired them all the more for their delicacy of feeling, but earnestly entreated there might be no more restraint between them. But gently and kindly Mrs Neville assured her, her affection would always be the same, but her position required that any advance to intimacy must come from herself. Clara determined, as it was in her power, never to permit any further distance between them—feeling, as she ever should do, that to them she owed all the comfort she possessed in the world ; for had they not taught her where to look for support in all dangers and distress—to the only Refuge of sinners in their passage through this vale of tears ? She felt she could never be grateful enough to them, and they must ever have her best affections on earth. The few weeks the friends spent together were indeed a pleasure to both, and each day only seemed to draw them closer together in the bonds of friendship. Clara could not but look forward with regret to the arrival of her aunt ; and as each day brought the event nearer, she grew the more fearful lest her quiet, happy life should be ruffled by the sourness of her aunt's character.

The Sunday previous to Miss Hamilton's arrival, was the first on which it had been considered safe for Clara to venture to church. With what pleasure did she once more enter its hallowed precincts ! Mr Langford's sermon was well suited to calm her sorrowing spirit. It was

taken from Revelations vii. 13 to 17. The clergyman spoke much of the happiness of those who had died in the Lord ; but dwelt much on the reward of those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, shall inherit those blessed promises, whose blessedness eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. He drew his hearers to dwell on the promise, that he "that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." "Let us then strive," he added, "to be among that happy number of whom it is said, 'They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.' Then let sorrow and trouble come, it will not move us, for we are Christ's, and he will always be with us—an unfailing friend—a brother in adversity."

After the service, thankful for the privilege, Clara received the sacrament, and returned home refreshed and strengthened by the feast. Mr Langford walked home part of the way with them, as he had not seen his sister for some days ; and they both spoke in their kind soothing way to Clara. There was no one could do it as they did, because they both spoke from the heart ; there was no one could assist her as they did, if any doubt or difficulty came into her mind ; and, above all, she saw how their lives accorded with all they did, and how anxious they were to lead others to the cross of Christ. "Example is better than precept," says an old proverb ; and so it is. It may be well to give advice ; but if the precept be not acted upon by the adviser, it will generally be truth thrown away. Mr Langford always seemed to know what Clara wanted, and, in parting, frequently gave her a text. This morning, it was—"These things have

I spoken, that in me ye might have *peace*. In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, *I have overcome the world.*"

Miss Hamilton arrived about the middle of the following week, and was greeted most kindly by her niece. In return, she formally pressed her thin lips upon her niece's forehead, and hoped she was well. But anything but cordial was her manner, as she could not forgive the slight that had been put upon her, when Sir Edward had taken his daughter from her care, and when, on his return, he had never sent for her to take charge of Clara again, whom she still regarded as a complete child. Clara's feelings were much chilled by her aunt's cold recognition. She had hoped she might have had some little sympathy for her deep loss ; but she soon found this was not to be expected—for she seldom mentioned Sir Edward's name without some slight upon it—so that Clara, at length, requested her father might never be made a subject of conversation between them. Miss Hamilton soon contrived to take the household arrangements into her own hands, considering her niece as too young to understand the management of them. This, Clara would willingly have relinquished, as it would have given her leisure for more congenial employments ; but the perpetual commotion created by Miss Hamilton's officiousness among the domestics, who persisted in regarding Miss Howard as their mistress, in spite of all Aunt Lydia could say to the contrary, often caused Clara great uneasiness, as the servants either lived in a state of open rebellion, or left their situations, and many of them after having lived half their lives there. Besides this, Miss Hamilton took a most

inveterate dislike to Mr Langford and Mrs Neville, who were never treated with the commonest civilities when they met. She never could forgive the clergyman, because he had induced her niece to teach in the Sunday-school,—a species of instruction she had the utmost aversion to. And when she took him to task about it, his answers were so calmly decisive as to the desirableness of such institutions, that she grew angry, and ever after was rude to him. As for Mrs Neville, she certainly had no real fault to lay to her charge, except that she was her niece's dearest friend. Clara, mildly as she bore with her aunt, would not submit to see her friends treated so unkindly, quietly informed her aunt of her wish that she would alter her mode of speaking to or receiving them, and, without waiting to hear the angry remonstrance, left the room, fearful of giving way to any unkind feeling to her aunt. Neither would she permit Miss Hamilton to interfere with the steward, which much excited her indignation. In all serious matters of business, Clara referred to Mr Hamilton, until she came of age, though she knew far better than most women how to manage her estate; for her father, feeling how precarious his own health was, had made her acquainted with a great many business affairs, that, were he taken from her before she should marry, she might be able to manage as much as was necessary without assistance. Miss Hamilton often complained to her brother of what she called Clara's obstinacy, but Mr Hamilton knew his sister's propensity to interference too well to take any notice of what she said. But though Clara's life was not so happy as it might have been, had her aunt behaved more kindly, yet still there

remained her own dear little room, which Miss Hamilton never entered. There she could sit and read, think or sing, without disturbance. And sometimes, through the little white gate, Mrs Neville would come and spend an hour with her, of which Miss Hamilton was quite unaware, imagining Clara could never see her friend without acquainting her with it, and entirely forgetting the path from the parsonage through the fields. These visits were the greatest comfort Clara possessed ; for sometimes bitter, sorrowful thoughts would rise in her mind, disturbing her peace ; but Mrs Neville would always direct her to the only source of comfort. One day, on returning from a visit to the school, she met Mr Langford. It was so seldom she saw him now, it was a great pleasure to her ; and as he walked a little way with her, she mentioned to him some of her doubts and fears. Then he spoke so beautifully and kindly to her, telling her these were some of the temptations of Satan to try to shake her faith.

" Look," he said, " with the eye of faith to your Saviour, as the bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent and were healed. You can behold him, then, listening to your prayer, and telling you to ' fear not, for he will strengthen and help you ' in all difficulties, for his grace is sufficient for you, and his strength is made perfect in your weakness. He will never leave you nor forsake you. You must not permit doubts of his mercy to trouble you any more. If not even a sparrow fall to the ground without his knowledge, and if even the very hairs of your head be numbered, surely he will never forget you. Therefore strive against all these temptations. Pray that your faith may be made greater than before. If it be weak, you will

have many a hard conflict with your spiritual enemy. But prayer, fervent prayer, is your protection. Remember the words of the hymn—

“ ‘Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.’ ”

He always attacks those whose faith is least firm. These fears which you tell me of now, are owing to the peculiar circumstances in which you are placed ; but you will have to struggle manfully against them. Be determined to overcome them. I know well how all Christians are subject to them. Sometimes for weeks I have only had occasional glimpses of the Holy Spirit's work ; but the more we resist these temptations, the feebler we shall find them ; therefore, again let me warn you not to admit into your mind a single doubt of Christ's willingness to save.”

Clara felt much comforted by this assurance. To know that Mr Langford had been subject to the same feelings was a great surprise to her. He never seemed depressed, but always joyful in believing ; but it was a comfort to her to feel how well he could sympathise—and after that she felt better able to struggle against her depression.

Aunt Lydia, as may be supposed, did not at all approve of these proceedings ; and she repeatedly rebuked her niece sharply for teaching in the Sunday-school, attending church twice on Sunday, reading her Bible and other religious books, and, more than all, attending to what Mr Langford thought right to be done,—to all which Clara replied with the greatest mildness, simply and openly telling her aunt her motives for so doing, and never speaking unkindly or disrespectfully to her. She cheerfully bore all her harshness, considering it a daily cross given

her, and one which, no doubt, was to answer some wise design of her heavenly Father for her good, and to perfect her in that Christian grace "which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; for charity never faileth."

Thus weeks passed on; and towards the close of September, Mr Hamilton again urged the duty of paying a visit to the sea-side, before the weather grew cold. Clara no longer resisted his persuasions, seconded by those of Mrs Hamilton, that she would join their party at Staunton, —a quiet place, suitable for one who was still so much an invalid as Clara. Ere she left Beech-hall, however, she perceived Mrs Neville looked faded and ill; and knowing how much the sea-breezes would benefit her, she determined to propose to her aunt that Mrs Neville should come to them in a week. To this Mrs Hamilton readily consented, for she was always ready to oblige her niece, to whom she was most sincerely attached. Clara lost no time in sending for her friend, who would have declined, had not Mr Langford urged it, knowing it was only her fear that he would be lonely without her which prevented her accepting the invitation.

After Mrs Neville came, the visit was very delightful. The fresh sea-breezes, as they fanned their pale cheeks, revived them greatly; and, wandering along the sea-shore, they could raise their minds to the mighty Creator of all things. There is something wonderful and grand in the roar of the ocean, so uncontrolled by man, and yet which cannot pass the bounds appointed by its Maker. The two friends would listen to the waves dashing onward—now rising, now falling to a gentle ripple—or watch the sun

sinking to rest behind the hills, reflecting his golden beams in the water, and think of that time when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings ; when he shall come, travelling in the greatness of his strength ; when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, when he shall reign for ever. " Even so ; come, Lord Jesus," was the echo of both their hearts. Again, the boats safely anchored on the shore would remind them of that anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, to which they clung, and without which they knew they would be driven far away from safety. Ah ! how much more has the Christian to contemplate than the worldling, when in everything he beholds the hand of his Creator.

The sea-side visit was one of great pleasure to Clara and her friend. Mrs Hamilton heard them speak, and they tried to direct her mind to join with them ; but their words were to her like a very beautiful song, the music of which was sweet, but the words incomprehensible. She knew she loved both Clara and her friend, but had no sympathy in their feelings.

With her two cousins, Ada and Sophia, Clara could speak more readily, because they were young, and felt their cousin knew so much better than they did what was right. Thus she hoped to instil into their youthful minds something of those great truths which she had now learned herself. They loved Clara dearly, and tried to copy her example ; and seeing her patience in bearing her own trials, they tried to struggle against their own little cares, or, indeed, to forget them altogether.

After the first fortnight, Mrs Neville seemed much

benefited by the change, and being unwilling to leave home longer than she could help, proposed returning ; but Mrs Hamilton had learned to love her so well, that she warmly seconded her niece's entreaties that she would remain with them longer. She at length consented, on condition that her brother should not require her presence. But, though he felt her absence deeply, Mr Langford knew too well the benefit his sister received by the change, and also the happiness she experienced in being with Miss Howard, to persuade her to return sooner than necessary. A thought of self seldom intruded into Mr Langford's mind,—he lived so entirely for others, always trying, like the Master he served, to be going about doing good, and making others happy.

"I wonder whether we shall ever see this place again, Emily," said Clara, the evening before their departure, after a visit of some weeks to Staunton, as they stood together on the sea-shore.

"Yes ! but better we should not know. I often think, if we knew of events that should happen to us beforehand, how miserable we should be."

"Indeed we should. Think if I had known of my dear father's death for a year before, what a dreadful life I should have led ! It would have deprived me of any enjoyment I could have had."

"How much better to leave all events in the hand of our God, knowing that all things shall work together for good to those that love Him," replied Mrs Neville.

"Yes ! Oh, Emily, how could I ever have borne my loss without Christ to strengthen me ! And I never can be thankful enough for the blessed consolation of knowing my beloved parent is in heaven. His last words, though

few, what firm trust was in them ! I can now say with truth, I would not have him back again here, and I am more drawn to my Saviour than I was. I feel heaven nearer than ever, now that I have a treasure there ; and where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," said Clara.

" Yes, I have long felt that, and each trial I have had only serves to make me sit more loosely to the things of this world, and to regard it but as a temporary home, while I look forward to an eternal habitation in heaven, where those loved have gone before."

" Do you see that little boat, Emily ? how restlessly it is tossing on the troubled waters ! will it reach the shore in safety ?"

" Oh yes ! Though tossed about, I do not think there is any real danger. What an emblem of life ! How seldom are our seas calm and peaceful ! Have we not constantly to be struggling with something ? But have we not a Pilot to guide us, who will bring us safely to land ? When our hearts fail us, can we not hear his voice amid the storm—' It is I, be not afraid !' He knows all the rocks and quicksands with which his people are often endangered. Thus

" Render'd safe by his protection,
We shall pass the watery waste ;
Trusting to his wise direction,
We shall gain the port at last ;
And with wonder think o'er toils and dangers past.

" Oh ! what pleasures there await us—
There the tempests cease to roar ;
There it is that those who hate us,
Shall molest our peace no more—
Trouble ceases on that tranquil happy shore !"

"Those are beautiful lines, Emily. You always seem to know some hymn suitable for what we have been talking about."


"I am very fond of sacred poetry; and often when I have been ill, and in the most pain, by learning hymns I have almost forgotten it, in the pleasure I have felt in the exercise."

"Yes, I daresay. See, Emily, the little boat is all safe now, and the sailors are on land; so we must turn our steps homeward, or darkness will overtake us."

Clara's health was now fully restored. The sharpness of her trial was also over. She could feel a chastened pleasure in things which she once thought could never more afford her joy, and acknowledge that she must again begin her work in earnest. A new and heavy responsibility rested upon her,—how much it was in her power to do good, not only in relieving the temporal wants of her dependants, but in endeavouring, by precept and example, to lead them in the right path. Like a ministering angel, she went about among her tenantry that winter. It was a very hard one for the poor, but none were left uncared for by their young mistress; for whom all felt the greatest respect and affection.

Sir Alfred Howard continued to write the most affectionate letters to his niece, and his last communication announced his intention of being in London in February,—the time now fixed for Clara's proposed visit to Mr and Mrs Hamilton, as Lord and Lady Cleveland did not return until December, and then Kate's health prevented Mrs Hamilton being able to see her niece until the important event then expected had taken place. In the beginning

of January, Clara had the pleasure of hearing of her cousin's safety, and the birth of an heir. Most sincerely she rejoiced ; and when, soon after, Kate wrote herself, to ask her to be the godmother of her infant, she felt a pleasure she had not known for many months. She reached London about the end of the following month, and had the satisfaction of seeing the increasing affection of Lord Cleveland for his bonnie wee wife, who seemed merrier than ever, dancing about the house like a child, and playing with her baby more as a sister than a mother would have done. But much of the worldly frivolity of her nature seemed gone. Her maternal feelings led her to enjoy home and quiet so much more ; and the delight she had once felt when dressing for a ball was now often interrupted by exclamations of regret at parting with her child for so many hours. The more Clara saw now of Lord Cleveland, the more she liked him. He, too, had lost most of the foolish, flattering manner he once had, and home was now the charm to him, even more than Kate, and he was evidently doing his utmost to retire more and more from gaiety, and becoming more domestic in his habits. When Clara had been with them a week, she was agreeably surprised, on returning from her drive, to find her uncle had arrived from Southampton, and had promised to call again in the evening. With what joy Clara looked forward to this meeting ! He was her father's only brother, and she longed to love him for her father's sake. In the evening, Lord and Lady Cleveland being engaged, Clara waited alone to receive Sir Alfred Howard ; and it was with no little trepidation she entered the room where he had been shewn until she could join him. How



warm was his reception, as he met her with open arms, calling her his dear Clara, and then holding her a little from him that he might examine her features!

"Not much like poor dear Edward. Very like your mother though. Well, she was one of the loveliest women I ever saw; but you greatly excel her," he said, gazing upon her in evident admiration. Clara blushed. "You need not blush, dear girl; it is true. Though my off-hand manner may startle you at first, you will get accustomed to me by and by."

"Oh yes! You cannot tell how glad I am to see you, dear uncle; and whoever I may be like, *you* recall my dear father very forcibly to me."

"Yes, Edward and I were always said to be very much alike, I know. You will not remember much of me though. Do you recollect how frightened you were with my sword?"

"No, I do not remember it now," said Clara, smiling.

Her uncle then drew her kindly to him, and again kissed her affectionately, and very soon they were quite at home together; and Clara felt her utmost expectations were answered, as far as the kind, hearty manner of her uncle went. Though he was not quite so refined as her dear father, he could enter into her feelings on many points, and sincerely pitied the loneliness of her situation.

CLARA HOWARD.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh! my sister's voice is gone away!
Around our social hearth
We have lost its tones that once were gay,
So full of harmless mirth.
We miss the glancing of her eye,
The waving of her hair;
The footsteps lightly gliding by,
The hand so small and fair;
And the wild bright smile that lit her face,
And made our hearts rejoice;
Sadly we mourn each vanish'd grace,
But, most of all, her voice.

"But I shall hear my sister's voice,
In holier, purer tone,
With all the spotless souls rejoice,
Before the eternal throne."

BROWNE.

AFTER a week or two longer, Clara arranged to return to Beech-hall, where Sir Alfred was to join her as soon as his London business was completed. The Hamiltons and Clevelandes would have been much delighted if she would have remained longer; but Clara's heart yearned after her home and friends there, and she could not be prevailed on to prolong her visit,—a presentiment that Mrs Neville was not well made her uneasy. She had mentioned her increasing weakness in one of her letters, and Clara could not bear to linger any longer from her. Mrs Neville's

health was so precarious, it seemed as if even a breath might snap the frail thread of her life. She always seemed to think she should be taken away suddenly, and so earnestly desired it, that she was wont to make those exquisitely beautiful lines of Edmonston her own—

“Sudden as thought is the death I would die,
I would suddenly lay my shackles by;
Nor hear a single pang at parting,
Nor see the tear of sorrow starting,
Nor hear the quivering lips that bless me,
Nor feel the hands of love that press me,
Nor the frame, with mortal terror shaking,
Nor the heart, where love's soft bands are breaking.

So would I die!
All bliss, without a pang to cloud it!
All joy, without a pain to shroud it!
Not slain, but caught up, as it were,
To meet my Saviour in the air!

So would I die!
Oh, how bright
Were the realms of light
Bursting at once upon the sight!”

She had so often said she could not bear the pain of parting from her brother. Much as she longed to depart and be with Christ, the feeling of knowing all the grief her loss would cause him, might much disturb the peaceful calm of her death; and thus, if it were her Saviour's will, she would rather be taken at once. These thoughts came into Clara's mind as, late one evening, about the middle of March, she was seated once more in her own dressing-room, after her return from London only an hour before. She had despatched a messenger to the parsonage to inquire after her friend, and he had but just returned. Mrs Neville was not very well, he said, but no worse than she had been for some days. This was some relief to Clara;

but troubled thoughts were in her mind, and she passed a restless night. As early as she could next morning, much to Miss Hamilton's annoyance, she set out to the parsonage herself to see and inquire after one so very dear. A vague feeling of dread took possession of her mind, as she paused a moment before knocking at the door: all seemed still and silent. With a trembling hand she lifted the heavy knocker. She waited a long time before the door opened. At length a maid appeared—her eyes were swollen with weeping—her face troubled.

"How is Mrs Neville this morning?" inquired Clara, with as steady a voice as she could command. There was a pause—then a loud sob—then the words came—"She died about half-an-hour ago!"

Clara's heart seemed dead within her. She knew she fell down, but remembered no more until she found herself (it seemed an age after) laid on the sofa in the drawing-room at the parsonage, and saw Mr Langford's pale, sorrowing face before her, while the maid was applying restoratives.

"Was it a dream? Oh, Emily, Emily! have *you*, too, left me?" she said, hardly knowing to whom she spoke, as she tried to raise herself.

"No, dear Miss Howard, it was no dream—it is a reality. Emily, my darling sister, is 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.' She is, rejoicing in the presence of Him whom on earth she loved so well."

His lip quivered with intense emotion; but, for Clara's sake, he could not bear to give way to his grief, lest it should trouble her more. With a great effort, Clara again

attempted to raise herself, and to control her emotion ; and at length, with her voice almost choked with weeping, she said—" Mr Langford, I am truly sorry I should thus have obtruded upon your grief. I can assure you it has been unintentional. You know how I loved Emily ——" her voice failed her, and her tears flowed faster than ever.

" I know it ; and for that reason your presence now is more consoling than anything else could be, save that heavenly consolation which we shall always receive from above. We must lift our eyes to the mountains whence cometh help ; for God is a very present help in time of trouble. To Emily to die was gain ; she longed to depart and to be with Christ. Surely we cannot, we must not, repine that He has taken her to Himself."

" Yes ; but oh ! my faith is weak—the blow is so heavy, so unexpected !" murmured Clara.

" Yes, it was very sudden. Until a quarter of an hour before she died, I had no idea, or she either, that death was so near. She had been far from well for some days, but not so as to create any alarm,—she would not even allow the doctor to be sent for. Suddenly she felt and knew she was dying. I saw it too. No time was lost in procuring aid ; but it was too late, no power on earth could save her. If you had seen her happiness and joy, and yet sorrow for me, who would be left alone in the world—how she prayed for me, and for you ! She told me to tell you how she had thought of you in her last hour ; and then she calmly resigned herself to God. Her end was indeed perfect peace. Never, except your father's, have I seen so happy, so quiet a death-bed scene. And now I know she is at rest for ever." Mr Langford's voice

trembled as he finished ; and then for some moments bowed his head, and covered his face with his hands, in an agony of sorrow. Clara's heart bled within her. She felt she must forget her own sorrow, and try to comfort him. She was the only one who could offer consolation to the mourner.

"Let us not sorrow as others," she said, gently. "Let us remember that 'precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints ;' and has He not promised, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Isa. xliii. 2) ? Does not the angel of the Lord encamp round about those that fear Him ? Will He not support you ? Will you not rest in God, and make Him your stay ?"

"Your sympathy and heavenly comfort relieve me more than I can tell. Do not go just yet. You are not fit to walk. I had better send for your carriage," Mr Langford said, raising his head when she had finished, and seeing her intention of going.

"I am afraid I shall be obliged to trouble you," she said, for her knees trembled so violently she could not stand.

Mr Langford gave the order, and then returned to her.

"If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small ; though I feel overwhelmed with this affliction, I will still have faith—'though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' My Saviour has never failed me in any trial it has been my lot to bear. I desire to kiss the rod that has thus been sent to chastise me. I know I required

it—there is never one more trial sent than is needful. I loved Emily too well, or my heart was too closely bound to the world. I was forgetting that here we have no continuing city—that we are but strangers and pilgrims upon earth ; and God has seen fit in His mercy again to remind me we are but frail, dying creatures, and to make me cling more closely to Himself,” Mr Langford replied, more calmly than he had yet spoken.

They were silent again a few moments, and then Clara said—“ And I believe, too, that strength shall be given as our day. And what a comfort to the believer, to know that in all our afflictions Christ is afflicted ! And surely there is joy in heaven when a saint has entered her rest. And in a few short years, at most, we can look forward to that blissful meeting above with those loved ones who have arrived there before us.”

“ Yes, dear Miss Howard, none of these trials will, I trust, move me. You cannot tell how great a comfort it is to have some one to talk to of Emily. You knew and valued her. I shall miss her much—oh, how much !—but I would not have her here again, were I never to spend a happy moment more on earth.”

His eye glistened as he spoke ; and so holy and resigned an expression beamed on his face, Clara felt how far superior were his faith and love to hers. He had comforted her as much as she had consoled him. She felt the blow would have been insupportable to her almost, had not his calm deep tones breathed faith and hope into her ear.

The sound of approaching wheels was heard, and Clara rose, feeling stronger now. Mr Langford paused for a

moment, and then said—"Would you like to see her Miss Howard?"

Clara silently bowed her head, and followed him to the chamber of death. The sweet face was much changed, though a faint smile lingered on it yet, as if a ray of glory had lighted upon the countenance from the brighter world, even before the departure of the spirit. Clara stooped and kissed the marble brow of her friend, as the words occurred to her, "He shall swallow up death in victory." It surely here was a mighty victory!—a triumph—in and through the Redeemer! Death had no sting, the grave no terrors. "Ah, that my death may be like this!" thought Clara, as silently she gave her hand to Mr Langford, and they again descended.

"We shall bear this heavy sorrow together, and may it indeed be sanctified to us. Pray for me, my dear friend, that my strength fail not; and for us both, that more and more we may be weaned from the world, and cling more closely to Christ."

Clara raised her eyes, streaming again with tears—"Yes, I will indeed. May you be supported by Him who never resists the mourner's plea for help!" she said, as they parted.

The door closed upon the bereaved brother: then, though he struggled manfully against it, he felt he was indeed alone; but his Christian fortitude was maintained, and, with none else to console him, he looked to his God, feeling He alone was the refuge of His people, and would never fail them.

Clara returned home almost heart-broken; and retiring to her own room, passed many hours alone with her

God, pouring out before Him the sorrows that oppressed her. But when she remembered the calm though deep grief of Mr Langford, she felt her faith was weak—how much greater his loss was than her own:—and gradually she grew more resigned; and though her tears flowed freely, she felt how well it was that her heavenly Father was thus afflicting her, and trusted that each sorrow was purging away the dross that remained, and making her more and more His own child.

Aunt Lydia shewed more sympathy than might have been expected, by permitting her niece to remain undisturbed for the next few days. Clara employed herself in reading her Bible, and in prayer for her minister and herself, that no murmuring thought might ever rise in their bosoms. This grief re-opened the wound that had been caused by the death of her father, who had died almost a year before. Again all seemed to rise before her, as if it were but yesterday that he had been taken from her; and now one of her dearest earthly friends was gone. Then, in meek submission she bowed her wearied head, and said—

“ If Thou dost call me to resign
What most I prize—it ne’er was mine;
Thou only takest what is thine:
Thy will be done.”

For many days, the sudden shock she had received made Clara very ill, so that she was unable to attend the funeral of her friend. She lay on her couch, and listened to the mournful tolling of the bell, the day Mrs Neville’s remains were committed to the earth. She permitted all her domestics, who had known and loved Mrs Neville, to

attend the service, that they might shew the respect they entertained for her and their minister. Lewis returned home in tears, to give her young mistress an account of the mournful scene. She said the church was filled ; aged people, who could scarcely crawl, had been there, and bitter tears had been shed on all sides.

“ And, ma’am,” continued Lewis, “ it was heartrending to see how ill and careworn Mr Langford looked, as he stood, with his arms folded, by the vault ; and yet he seemed so resigned—I could not help crying.”

Neither could her mistress when she heard of it.

In a few days more, Clara was able to walk in the garden, and on Sunday to attend church again. As she passed along, and listened to the bells calling to the house of prayer, they did not seem to ring so merrily as once ; yet, with a feeling of thankfulness for the privilege, she entered the church again. A stranger took the service in the morning, and the place which had once been Emily’s, Clara saw Mr Langford occupied. In the evening, he took the sermon himself, and preached from those beautiful words—“ There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun ; for the Lord God giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever.” As the clergyman proceeded to describe the blessedness of heaven and the redeemed who dwell there, his eye grew brighter and his voice firmer, and a burst of holy eloquence came from his lips, such as had never before been heard in the old church of Wilming-

ton. And then his voice grew fainter again, as he alluded to the dear one who had been removed from among them so suddenly,—one so much beloved by all, and who had so long been prepared to die. “Oh ! my people,” he concluded, “I can never press upon you too strongly the necessity of always being ready ; live each moment as if it were your last ; so that, whenever the awful summons shall come, it may find you ready, that you may feel it is a blessed thing to die. And may He who alone can give peace in the dying hour be with you, and make the dark valley of the shadow of death light, and guide you safely to heaven, there to reign with Him for ever and ever !”

The evening was cold and damp as Clara returned home, but she perceived it not ; she heeded not the biting wind. Even the sharp remonstrance of her aunt, for exposing her delicate frame in such a night, failed, when she entered the house, to disturb the calm and holy joy that reigned within her heart.

“I shall take no harm, aunt, thank you. I would not have been absent this evening for all I have,” she replied, softly.

“Of course, you must take your own way. When Sir Alfred Howard comes, perhaps he will make you mind yourself a little more, for I have no authority whatever over you.”

“Do not say that, aunt. I am sure I feel it very kind in you to take this trouble about my health ; but I assure you I will be careful,” she said, kindly, as she pressed her lips to her aunt’s forehead and wished her good-night. Miss Hamilton did not reply, or take any notice of her niece’s affection.

A few days after, Mr Langford called at the Hall, and, for once Miss Hamilton was engaged in another part of the house, and Clara only saw him. He came, he said, to thank her for her sympathy, and to tell her what a comfort it had been to him in his lonely hours ; and also to ask her if she would like to take Mrs Neville's class in the Sunday-school, as he knew it had been his sister's desire, should anything occur to render her unable to continue there. Clara would not refuse, though sorry to leave her own little girls, who were beginning to improve much with her instructions ; but she felt there must ever be the deepest interest in taking her friend's class, and carrying forward the work she had begun. Besides, there was no other lady in the neighbourhood who would be able to undertake to teach pupils so far advanced ; for the teachers generally were only half-educated farmers' daughters, who knew just sufficient to teach the younger children only.

"I shall be very glad to take dear Emily's class," she said, after a moment's consideration. "And also, may I have the charge of her district? I will do my best to visit among the people, as she would have done."

"I am sincerely obliged to you for this offer, Miss Howard ; but do you think you can keep up your own and hers too? Don't be too hard upon yourself—your strength may not be equal to your desire."

"Oh, I can manage it very well. I have considered the matter previously. I trust, now, all my time and energies may be given up to work for the cause of God. All I have—all I am—I desire to yield to His service ;

and if this is the path marked out, as I believe it to be, I feel ready to engage with my whole heart in it."

"That is well, my dear Miss Howard; and I think your influence cannot be better used than by visiting yourself among your tenants, and urging upon them the duty of living only to God. Religious instruction may perhaps sink deeper coming from your lips. There are some even in this village who imagine I have some interest in persuading them to think of the concerns of their never-dying souls."

"Is it possible that any one can be so uncharitable!" exclaimed Clara.

"I do not say there are many, and those I refer to have lately settled in this neighbourhood; and I trust, by God's help, I shall soon be able to shew them my sole aim is to glorify God, by inducing as many as possible to love and serve Him, so long as my life shall last. I feel, as you do, more than ever willing to spend and be spent, and to give up health, wealth, and, if need be, life also, to do His will."

"How little we know," replied Clara, "what we can do, or give up, until we are tried! How plainly I see the strength that has been given me to bear all my trials! Do you remember once asking me if I were willing to give up all, if I should be called upon to do it, for Christ's sake? I hesitated then. Now, I have parted from those dear ones, for whom I must ever feel the fondest remembrance, and yet, though at first it seemed hard to bear, I can say I feel almost happy when I remember they have so safely passed through the dark waters of death, and could almost envy their blessedness."

"I can feel the same; and though my life is now very

lonely, I could not wish it otherwise," replied Mr Langford, as he rose to take leave. "When do you expect Sir Alfred Howard, may I ask?"

"Next week, I hope; but his stay will, I fear, for the present, only be short, as his business must require him to be in London again soon. He is so much like dear papa in many things, I felt drawn to him at once."


"Yes; I heard he was thought very much like Sir Edward. It will be a great comfort to you to have him for a guardian. He will be like a second father," he said, kindly.

"No, never can any one fill *his* place, I fear," replied Clara, with a faint smile.

Sir Alfred arrived the following week. His presence was a very great relief to Clara; for Aunt Lydia's disposition only seemed to increase in sharpness as her stay continued at Beech-hall. A good-humoured gay man, like Sir Alfred, was not likely to agree with Miss Hamilton, who had earnestly hoped she might find some one who would oppose Clara's works of charity. She could not bear to see her day by day visiting among the villagers, and caring so for the wants of the sick and old. She had written to Mr Hamilton on the subject, and received in reply, that if Clara liked to amuse herself by reading to dirty old women, or teaching ragged children, he did not see that it was any affair of hers. Miss Hamilton then communicated the routine of her niece's labours of love to Lady Cleveland; but Kate only laughed, and told her aunt, in reply, Clara might do as she chose—if it gave *her* pleasure, why should she object? But Sir Alfred soon excited great indignation; for not only did he

openly say his niece was in the right, and he admired and esteemed her for acting thus, but he frankly told Miss Hamilton she had no business to interfere, as Clara was old enough to judge for herself in all these matters, and that he would not permit Miss Hamilton to treat her niece as a child. The house was soon in a state of confusion. Miss Hamilton and Sir Alfred had not an idea in common, and never met without some argument, in which Aunt Lydia was sure to have the worst of it ; and then Sir Alfred would laugh gaily, and try to make the old lady good-tempered again, which he never was able to succeed in doing.

Sir Alfred was not a decidedly religious man ; but he had much good and serious feeling, and most sincerely admired true piety in others. Clara he quite revered, while he regarded Mr Langford with the greatest respect ; sought his company, both at home and abroad ; listened attentively to all he said ; and encouraged Clara in doing all the clergyman wished. His chief fault lay in his uncontrollable dislike to Miss Hamilton. He could not resist teasing her upon points on which he knew her to be peculiarly touchy ; and she declared, before he had been a week in the house, he was the most disagreeable man she had ever known. Now that Sir Alfred was at Beech-hall, the presence of Miss Hamilton was no longer necessary or desirable ; but she gave no hint of her intention to return home, and Clara had every reason to suppose her aunt had taken up her abode with her altogether. Aunt Lydia's prolonged stay must bring many added trials ; but Clara remembered that she was her mother's sister, and that it was her duty to contribute in every possible



way to her happiness. Sir Alfred alone shrugged his shoulders when he heard her express her intention of permitting her aunt to reside there altogether, if he made no decided objection.

"Well, my dear, I wish you joy of her. A more unenviable companion I have seldom met with."

"But she brought mamma up, and was with me when I was a child. I ought not to be unkind to her."

"No, no! certainly not; but she and I together will keep you in a perpetual state of commotion. I cannot resist tormenting her; really to see the rage of the poor old lady is quite ludicrous."

"But, please, dear uncle, don't do it. She takes everything you say in earnest. Pray try to be friends together, for my sake."

"For your sake, my darling, I will try to do as you wish. Only"—he added, with a comic expression—"if you have any design to bring about a match between Miss Hamilton and myself, it would be a stretch of goodness on my part which not even for you could I consent to."

"I am quite innocent of any such design, I can assure you, uncle," replied Clara, laughing, and kissing him affectionately.

CHAPTER XVII.

"They sin who tell us love can die :
With life all other passions fly—
All others are but vanity.

"Its holy flame for ever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth.
Too oft on earth a troubled guest—
At times deceived, at times oppress'd—
It here is tried and purified,
And hath in heaven its perfect rest.
It soweth *here* with toil and care,
But the harvest-time of love is there."

SOUTHEY.

"THAT wearisome solicitor of mine is bothering me again. When will these affairs of yours and mine be settled, Clara?" said Sir Alfred, about a fortnight after his arrival at Beech-hall.

"And shall you be obliged to return to London again so soon?" asked Clara, who dreaded her uncle's departure.

"Why, I suppose I must for a few days. But I have been thinking this morning, Clara, your tenantry have never been fêted since you came of age; and I think you should have something for them soon."

"I was with the Clevelands on my birthday, glad to escape from anything of the kind; and since poor Emily's death I have had no heart for such things."

"No, I daresay not, my dear. No wonder; but your recent trials will be sufficient excuse for not making a great fuss about the thing. What do you say to a dinner for the people, at which I can preside for you,—that will be taking the trouble off your hands?"

"Oh, thank you! Then will you see about the arrangements as soon as possible. I should like it to be over before you return to London."

"So *I* think, the sooner the better. Whitehead and I can easily make the arrangements. I shall return to London next week—and all can be over by that time," replied Sir Alfred. And then he left his niece to her own meditations. It was a great relief to her to have her uncle to manage all such affairs as these for her. Clara felt her heart could respond to no rejoicings for having come into possession of a property she had so ardently desired her beloved father might live long to enjoy. She looked forward to no increased pleasure in the enjoyment of so much wealth. She knew many envied her lot; but how little they were aware of the load of care and responsibility the increase of riches brought upon her! She knew it was not given her that she might spend it in vain pleasure or useless luxury. She knew it was lent to her to be used in God's service—and that to whom much is given, of them shall much be required. She felt how little she knew how to use it aright. She could now fully enter into Mr Langford's feelings, when he told Claude Hamilton how glad he was that the wealth he was to have had, had been lost to him, the responsibility would have been so great. "What, then," thought Clara, "must I feel, a poor helpless girl, with so few opportunities of being

directed to use this talent aright." Then she remembered to pray that she might be led to see some way by which she could still more advance the cause of God by her wealth, as well as by devoting herself to His service.

The dinner passed off to the satisfaction of all. Sir Alfred's speech was loudly cheered; he spoke so beautifully of his brother's death, and of their young mistress, and all her goodness and kindness in caring for their welfare, that at once he endeared himself to all.

"Well, my dear girl, this formidable affair is over, and all passed off very pleasantly, I think," he said, in the evening, when the people had departed.

"I am very glad to hear it; but must you really go to-morrow, uncle?"

"Yes, I think so; but I hope to be back before the end of the week. You must manage with the old lady as well as you can."

"Yes, I suppose so. I shall, however, be very glad to see you back."

"Thanks! Now, good-night. I should not have kept you up so late, but you seemed so anxious to hear how we managed. I must reserve all particulars until my return."

"Good-night, and good-bye, too, dear uncle," said Clara, as she left the room.

It was a pleasant spring afternoon, a few days after Sir Alfred's departure, that Clara was sitting in her own room. The weather was so mild the windows were open; and, as she listened to the birds singing, and heard the bleating of the lambs in the park, the beautiful description of spring, given in the Song of Solomon, came into her mind—"Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers

appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

"How soft, how calm all is!" thought Clara; "but I am very lonely. I do not enjoy the spring as I used to do. Last year dear Emily was with me, and, before that, my beloved father. Now, both have left me; I am indeed alone! I wonder," she added to herself, "why Mr Langford so seldom comes now? He knows how welcome he always is. None can cheer me as he can; and he says my sympathy is his greatest comfort. Why, then, does he so seldom come?" She looked, with tears in her eyes, at the little white gate, now so seldom opened; then hastily dashing away her tears, she drew the harp to her, and, in a sweet, clear voice, sung the beautiful melody Mrs Neville used to sing to her, and the one she had first learned. The words died away, and Clara leaned on her harp, and one pearly tear fell upon it. A slight noise made her raise her head, and she saw Mr Langford standing a few yards from the open glass doors. A beam of joy lit her face when she perceived him.

"I must apologise for being a listener, Miss Howard; but that song, so well known and loved, recalled past scenes to me so forcibly, I could not resist the temptation of listening to it once more, I had such a melancholy pleasure in doing so."

"I am very glad you did, if it gave you any pleasure to hear *me* sing it."

"There is no one can sing it as you do. I *feel* the words when sung by your voice."

Clara blushed slightly, but felt a thrill of joy pass over her, to know that it had given Mr Langford pleasure.

"Are you particularly engaged this afternoon?" Mr Langford inquired, after a pause.

"No, I am not likely to be disturbed."

"Thank you. Then, will you permit me to speak for a few minutes to you *alone*?"

Clara raised her eyes at so unusual a request, made in a voice so low and tremulous; then she perceived how pale and agitated Mr Langford looked, and what a struggle he had to speak calmly. Clara trembled inwardly, and merely bowed her head in reply to his question. Mr Langford took a seat, and, for a moment or two, they spoke on ordinary subjects; then Mr Langford said, calmly—"I know not, Miss Howard, whether you remember the first evening we spent here, when Emily and you returned to the drawing-room before we left you. Your dear father was speaking about missions; and I then said, were it ever in my power, I had an earnest desire to devote myself to preach the gospel to the heathen. On her death-bed, I promised my mother I would do this, but not unless an opening was made for me. So long as Emily lived, this was impossible. It was my duty to care for and protect her; but she has left me, to shine in her heavenly Father's kingdom"—his voice faltered for a moment. "There remains now no impediment to prevent my becoming a missionary."

From the moment he had begun to speak, Clara felt the blood forsake her cheeks, and she grew cold as ice. Her tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth, and her voice failed her. After a moment's pause, Mr Langford proceeded in a more agitated tone—"Arrangements are now completed. I must leave England in a few months; but, ere my intended departure was known,

I had a favour to ask of you, Miss Howard, if I am not too presuming, with regard to my successor. I like Wilmington and its people so well, I should wish some one who would love them as I have done to fill my place."

He paused, but no reply came. Clara buried her face in her hands, and a perfect rain of tears relieved her. There was anguish in the clergyman's look as he gazed upon her. At length Clara raised her head. Their eyes met, and deep sorrow was in both. Mr Langford's lips seemed bloodless; his face white as marble.

"And what shall I do when *you* are gone?" burst unconsciously from Clara's lips. "You who have been my friend—my guide—my——" Her voice became indistinct.

Mr Langford passed his hand over his eyes, and sighed deeply. "God Himself will be your friend—your guide, even unto death. Would you wish to persuade me from this work? Must I resist the far-off call—'Come over and help us?' Oh! shall I not take the bread of life to thousands, perishing for want of it? Shall I not hear you rather wish me God speed?"

"Yes, yes; indeed, I do,—oh, how fervently! I envy you the work. How I—— Indeed, it was not that!" Clara exclaimed, again burying her face in her hands.

"You envy me the work! Can it be possible? Would you, indeed, like to engage in it?" Mr Langford said, his voice trembling with emotion.

She raised her head, and the blood rushed to her face again, as she replied—"It is more than possible. I feel I could give my whole heart to it."

"Do I really hear aright? Would you? Might I

dare to hope you would be my partner in this blessed work? Could you give up your home, your friends, your country, and go with me to a foreign land—there to live and labour solely for Christ?”

She raised her beautiful head, and her deep blue eyes spoke volumes, as she replied—“ Yes, I could do it ! ”

Mr Langford struggled for a moment with the ray of joy that shone upon him, and pierced his inmost soul. “ Miss Howard, can you really mean it? You are so far above me ; such a step would lower you in the estimation of many, some of those dearest to you, perhaps. Think, too, of the privations you must endure. Can you really give up all? Beloved as you are, and ever must be unspeakably dear, I cannot, for my own sake, urge you to make so great a sacrifice.”

“ It is no sacrifice. Often have I longed to devote myself to God. Earth can afford me no greater happiness.”

Mr Langford clasped the dear hand in his own, and as he leaned forward, he murmured—“ My own, my dear, dear Clara! how can I ever thank you for those words? I never dared to hope for this.”

He drew her gently to him, while tears, bright happy tears, gushed into her eyes. Then all was spoken.

Mr Langford told her, how for many months he felt he loved her, and how, more than ever since Emily's death, he had felt lonely and desolate, and that her image was constantly before him ; but that, from the moment he knew how he loved her, he had endeavoured seldom to meet her, and then had zealously guarded his heart, that no word or look might betray his affection, feeling

how infinitely she was above him, and how her riches had placed a barrier between them ; how fearful he had been lest he should make an idol in loving her, and thus raise a stumbling-block in his way to being a missionary ; how often he had repeated the words—

“ The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee ! ”

how he had prayed and striven that worldly happiness might seem to him as nothing compared with the great work he had to do ; that he might leave all things in the hands of God, knowing that, if it were right, some way might be opened that Clara might become his own ; if not, that he might cheerfully resign her, knowing that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him. And now all was realised, or soon to be—as they sat together in that little room, knowing how they mutually loved, and desired to engage in the same blessed work.

Clara asked not, cared not to know his destination, to the frozen shores of Greenland, or the scorching plains of Africa—it was enough to feel that she was ready and willing to go with him. For the sake of Christ, she counted not her life dear to her, if she might but labour for him all the days of her allotted pilgrimage on earth. And with such a companion, how might they work together, heart and hand, loving one another, and helping one another to go forward unwearied in well-doing !

Hour after hour passed by, and the shades of evening were fast closing around them ere they heeded how time

fled. What an afternoon was that!—how full of joy, and hope, and love! How rich the feeling that they were to be united in one Christian bond—that their mutual feelings had at length been explained!

“I am sure my dear father would have sanctioned this, had he lived,” said Clara, as they heard the dressing-bell ringing and warning them they must soon separate.

“I trust he would. You know his feelings were much changed with regard to missions,” said Mr Langford, gently pressing the small hand he held in his own.

“Yes, I remember seeing some passages on the subject in your handwriting, on his table a short time before he died.”

“I daresay I remember copying them out for him once, after we had had a discussion on the subject. But I know his views were changed. He told me so, and agreed with me a missionary has a glorious work.”

Here a knock was heard at Miss Howard’s room door, and a servant came with a message from Miss Hamilton, to know if her niece was aware the bell had rung?

“I am coming presently,” was Clara’s reply.

Mr Langford rose. “I must not excite your aunt’s anger more than I can help. I fear I shall cause her great indignation when she hears our plans,” he said, smiling kindly.

There was a chastened hope and joy on his serene countenance, as he bade Clara farewell, as if such a halo of light had never before shone around his path. Gently he took hold of both her hands, and imprinted one kiss upon the fair brow of his future bride, as he said—“May God bless you for all this goodness to me! I now feel as if every

shadow of doubt or fear as to my future course had vanished. Oh, what a blessing to have such a companion as you to encourage and help me! 'Two are better than one,' the Wise Man says, 'because they have a good reward for their labour; for if one fall, the other will lift his fellow.' So shall it be, I trust, with us. We will build one another up in this glorious work. And how sweet will be the reward, if we are faithful unto death—that crown of life which shall never fade away!"

Clara looked up in his face with a sweet smile, and said—"Yes; if we are spared, I trust our hopes may be realised."

And then they separated. Clara watched him pass through the little gate into the wood. Then she knelt down, and clasping her hands, she fervently prayed for help, and then solemnly dedicated herself and all she had to God. And in that silent hour, the peace of God was upon her, and the words came into her mind—"Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." She felt her prayer was heard, and the blessing of God was with her.

She was only just in time for dinner. Aunt Lydia was in a very unpleasant humour.


"Pray, Clara, what have you been about all this afternoon? I do wish you would learn to be punctual at meal-times. For so young a person, such irregular habits are shameful!" said the sharp voice of Miss Hamilton, as Clara entered the dining-room.

"I am extremely sorry to have kept you waiting, aunt. I will endeavour not to be so unpunctual again," Clara replied, quietly.

"I do not know what you can have to keep you from being so. What have you been doing this afternoon?"

"I have been engaged. If you wish to hear how, I can tell you after dinner." There was a sparkle in Clara's blue eyes, as she spoke, very displeasing to her aunt, who could not bear to see any one look happy. In moody silence, the meal passed off; for Miss Hamilton was too much offended to speak, and Clara so much occupied with her own thoughts. When they returned to the drawing-room, Clara took up her work, intending to deny herself the pleasure of going to her own room, but to keep to her usual plan of remaining with her aunt during the evening, though longing to indulge in her own quiet thoughts, and to think of the happiness that now seemed around her future path. How delicious the sensation to be loved by such a man as Mr Langford, one who for some time she had thought so far superior to any other!—that he, so holy, so devoted, should desire to make her his wife! It seemed like a beautiful dream. She could hardly believe it. Then she seemed again to feel the gentle pressure of his hand, his look of intense love, the humility with which he seemed to feel it an honour far above what he had a right to expect, that she would bestow her hand upon him. His parting kiss still seemed to rest upon her brow. Tears of joy started to her eyes, her face grew flushed, her lips parted, and a radiant smile beamed on her countenance, as the work she held dropped from her fingers; and for a moment, she forgot the presence of Aunt Lydia, whose shrill voice roused her.

"How long, may I ask, do you intend to sit dreaming there, Clara, smiling as if your senses had forsaken you?"



Clara raised her eyes, to meet those of Miss Hamilton watching something in the same manner as a cat would do a mouse. "I am sorry, aunt—I was lost in thought—I will endeavour to be more sociable. Do you think Uncle Alfred will return to-night?"

"I am not going to be put off in that way, Clara. I hope your uncle will not return, I am sure; for he is one of the most provoking men I know. I really do not see why you should be so desirous of his being here continually. Why should he make this his home? Why not repair Elwin Priory, and live on his own property?"

"Because I have so earnestly requested him, for the present, to remain with me."

"And how dare you do so without consulting me? You seem quite to forget how young you are."

"My uncle is my guardian, aunt, and my father's brother, and the most suitable person to take care of me."

"Then I am nothing!—a mere cypher, I suppose?"

"Far from that, aunt. I mean no disrespect to you; but at the same time, you must allow, a gentleman will be able to manage my estates best for me."

"I allow no such thing. How can your uncle know anything about such things, having been occupied in hunting tigers for nearly twenty years in India?"

"He was only teasing us when he said so, aunt. He likes a joke now and then," said Clara, smiling.

"And I do not. I hate people who are always trying to deceive. I never trust them. I never shall believe another word your uncle says."

"You will retract that, aunt, I think, some time, and learn to value uncle, I hope."

"No, I never will."

"Then let us talk of something else, please, aunt. It is painful to hear you speak thus."

"Very well—the sooner we do it, the better. Now, I must request the honour of your confidence, Clara, as to your mysterious disappearance this afternoon for some hours. I really cannot understand the meaning of it. Had you a visitor, or were you alone?"

"I feel, aunt, you have no decided right to question me in this manner; but as I think you ought to know what I am about to tell you, I will own at once—Mr Langford was with me." A deep blush dyed her cheek as she spoke, and she hastily took up her work again.

"Upon my word, Clara, this is more than I could have expected, even from you. I strictly told Elliot always to tell me when Mr Langford came. Such a want of propriety—a young girl like you seeing him alone! Why did you not send for me? I shall speak to Elliot."

"I beg you will do no such thing, aunt. Elliot was as ignorant as you that Mr Langford was here."

"And did you open the door for him? Really, Clara, you forget ——"

"No, I did not. Mr Langford came through the fields, and, therefore, when I saw him, I asked him to come into my room. As his business was strictly private, I did not send for you. If, however, you wish to see him, I think I can promise you an opportunity soon."

"What do you mean, Clara? Do you suppose his society is so agreeable to me? The reason I ought to have been present was, that you might not be alone."

"Thank you, aunt," replied Clara, coldly, and turning

her face round, so that she might look at Miss Hamilton openly ; and then adding, very gently—"Thank you, my dear aunt, again. I will not be ungrateful for your consideration ; but you must excuse me if I offend you with what I am now going to say—I hope and trust I may enjoy many more such interviews as I have had to-day."

Aunt Lydia drew her tall, thin figure to its full height, and looked haughtily upon her niece, whose calm countenance evinced no change.

"Then I shall take care you do not ; and should you dare to disobey me, I will write to Mr Hamilton about you."

"I shall do so myself very soon, aunt. I desire to do all openly, and I will not hide from you my reasons. I have accepted Mr Langford—in other words, we are engaged." Clara spoke calmly and quietly, never withdrawing her clear, bright eyes from her aunt's face. Miss Hamilton grew pale with passion—she completely gasped for breath—at her niece's composure in uttering the words she had done.

"I always hated Mr Langford. I knew he had some design. Yes, yes ! I see—the hand of the heiress of £4000 a-year !—the mean, pitiful, mercenary fellow !" burst from her, in a torrent of passion.

Mildly Clara spoke. While considering the intensity of her aunt's anger and disappointment, she remembered that charity never faileth.

"I am very sorry to hear you speak in that way, aunt. It shews how little you really know of Mr Langford—how entirely free he is from avaricious motives—how he

has never tried to win my heart by word or look since I knew him! I cannot hear you speak of a man I love better than any one in the world in this way." Large tears were forcing themselves into her eyes, but she dashed them away.

"But you shall hear me speak, and as I choose. You shall hear from my brother on this subject. You shall see whether such a proceeding as this shall go on!" exclaimed Miss Hamilton, violently.

The young heiress stood before her in queenly dignity, looking calmly at her as she spoke; then she said firmly—"You are forgetting I am of age; and though I shall do nothing clandestinely, I am old enough to judge for myself. No one can prevent my marrying. Moreover, my dear father made that a condition in his will, that I should act for myself in this matter; and I firmly believe my father would have sanctioned this union. I now remember when, on his death-bed, and too weak to speak, he tried to move my hand into his other, which Mr Langford held, but he could not do it. It did not strike me then, but I now feel he would have wished to leave me to Mr Langford's care. I know he esteemed him more than any other man; and hosts of recollections come into my mind to prove he wished we might be united. I mean no disrespect to my guardians or any relation; but I would sooner give up everything I have in the world than lose Mr Langford's love. I care neither for wealth nor worldly greatness. I know I shall have one who will be a faithful guide to me for life—one who loves me with the most disinterested, sincere affection, while (I hesitate not to say it) I have loved him long more dearly

than any one in the world. He was the friend who warned me to read the Bible, and who led me to my Saviour, in whose love I have found the rest and peace I had so long sought in vain. He was with me when my dear, dear father died, and poured consolation into my wounded heart. His sister came and nursed me through that long illness ; and after she died, he forgot his own deep loss in trying to console me. In every earthly difficulty, he has assisted me. He has been more than a friend ! In return, I give him my heart, hand, and fortune, which is nothing compared with the inestimable treasure he has led me to find—the Pearl of great price, without which I must have lived and died, perhaps worse than a heathen, knowing not God, heedless of my Saviour !” She paused—her eyes glistened with unwonted lustre—her cheek flushed from her emotion. She looked beautiful—brilliantly lovely ! All the enthusiasm of her nature concentrated on her countenance. To the cold gray eye of Miss Hamilton, all this passed unobserved in the indignation which almost deprived her of utterance. Then she poured forth a torrent of words, in which abuse of Mr Langford was the most conspicuous. Clara was about to retire, and leave her aunt to vent her passion alone, when the door opened, and Sir Alfred Howard entered the room.

“ Hey-day ! what’s the row now ?—Clara looking like a tragedy queen, Miss Hamilton. A—a—I had better not draw comparisons, they are always said to be odious,” said Sir Alfred, laughing ; while Clara threw her arms round his neck, and burst into tears.

“ Row, indeed ! It’s of your niece’s making, if there is one.”

"Excuse me, my niece's voice is never raised to the pitch I heard outside in the hall just now. I heard a great deal of your concluding speech, Miss Hamilton; and, for a future occasion, I should advise you to modulate your tones, lest other ears than those intended should listen to your eloquence. Grieved I am to have heard the name of one whom I shall always revere, mentioned in so harsh a manner. I am sure, Miss Hamilton, you will be sorry for your abuse of so excellent a man as Mr Langford."

There was a calm dignity in Sir Alfred's manner that quelled Miss Hamilton, who, without speaking, swept haughtily from the room, closing the door with a sound that made the house ring.

"Poor old lady! how little she knows how to restrain her temper! She is greatly to be pitied. Now, Clara, dear, sit down here by me, and let me hear the whole of this very formidable quarrel between you."

"Certainly, uncle, though I am not without fear that you may think Aunt Lydia in the right; but my happiness is so entirely concerned in it, I feel you will hear me with patience, and not oppose my wishes."

"My dear child, I have so high an opinion of you, that I feel you must be in the right in whatever you may desire. Speak all, then, fearlessly; and if there is the slightest cause for my advice, I will give it you frankly, and then you must choose and act for yourself."

"Thank you, my dear, kind uncle—that is so like what papa would have said!" Then seating herself at his feet, holding his hand, she spoke hesitatingly at first, but growing more composed as she proceeded.

"Mr Langford has been here this afternoon. I saw

him alone. He came to tell me he was going out as a missionary. Uncle, I was distressed. My heart told me I loved him. He saw me weeping, and he drew from me the history of my love. I told him I would go with him. He gently and tenderly represented the dangers I must submit to in the life I should have to encounter. I cared not for them. Then we only knew we loved deeply and truly. Uncle, you cannot, will not blame me when I tell you how entirely I love Mr Langford, and how willingly I sacrifice everything to be his fellow-labourer."

She looked earnestly in his face. A momentary cloud had passed over it. Then he gazed upon her pleading face, and he kissed her.

"My own devoted girl!" he said; and then a pause ensued.

"And you do not object? Oh, uncle, how can I ever thank you!"

"I do not object to Mr Langford—far from it. For some time I have been convinced you and he were formed for one another. There is no man on earth, be he who he may, I honour so highly. But, my darling girl, your talents and his will be lost—buried completely in such an undertaking. I can hardly bear to think of such a thing, unless he is going to India."

"I never asked him where his destination was. It is all the same to me," said Clara—the happy smile once more returning to her face.


"You romantic girl! Why, Clara, you are a complete heroine!"

"No, not that; it would be such a happiness to live and labour with him."

"But, my dear, you ought to consider your own health. For instance, Sierra Leone has been called the White Man's Grave. I cannot give my sanction to any place unless the climate is good. But you little know, Clara, how I shall feel your loss. Very dear you have grown to me. If you go, I shall feel inclined to start again for India—I shall have no object in life then. Nevertheless, I cannot blame you. You are doing just what I might have expected from you—giving up your whole energies to work for a good cause. You will be rewarded for it."

"I feel unworthy of any reward. And, dear uncle, I should not like you for a moment to suppose either Mr Langford or I have any feeling that it is meritorious to do as we intend. Far from it. We desire simply to work for the love of Christ, and always to feel, when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. I must ever feel thus. How many, very many precious years have I wasted, when they might have been spent in God's service! I cannot recall them. So I must endeavour, while I may, to work; for soon the night cometh when no man can work."

"I wish I could feel more like you, Clara. Religion like yours must claim the highest respect. I cannot withhold my consent; and I will protect you from those who will. May God bless you, my dear child!" He clasped her in a close embrace, and then they parted for the night.



CHAPTER XVIII.

“Soldier, go! but not to claim
Mouldering spoils of earth-born treasure—
Not to build a vaunting name,
Not to dwell in tents of pleasure.
Dream not that the way is smooth—
Hope not that the thorns are roses;
Turn no wistful eye of youth
Where the sunny beam reposes.
Thou hast sterner work to do—
Hosts to cut thy passage through.
Close behind, the gulphs are burning:
Forward!—there is no returning.”

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.


LONG after Clara had left him, Sir Alfred Howard remained thinking deeply. He was not unprepared to hear from Clara that she was the affianced bride of Mr Langford. He had always had a presentiment they would be united; but he was startled when he heard the announcement of their plan of going out as missionaries. He knew it was no day-dream—no romantic, impulsive characters who had adopted the idea—it was evident their hearts were in it. What motive could either of them have save the love of Christ, and the desire to win souls? What devotion! What holy zeal for the cause of truth! What self-denial! How much each must sacrifice—Clara more especially! She who had been nursed in the lap of

luxury, had everything her heart could desire, or wealth could purchase—what a constraining love for Christ must she have to be ready to relinquish her beautiful home and country without one wish to retain it! Sir Alfred's heart smote him. His past life came forcibly upon him. He placed himself in Mr Langford's position—could he go and do likewise? His heart said "No." Then all was not well; if not ready to give up earthly happiness, he was not fit to be Christ's. "They have taught me a lesson I trust I shall not soon forget," he murmured, as he reached down the old family Bible, and rung for the evening prayers. When they were concluded, Miss Hamilton remained. For a moment, she was cold and petrified as ever. Then suddenly she rose and exclaimed, vehemently—"I hope, Sir Alfred, you have spoken very decidedly to Clara on this absurd affair, and that you will never again permit her to see Mr Langford?"

"I shall do no such thing. Clara was very much harassed this evening by the scene she has gone through with you, and I begged her to retire early; and I trust you will not mention the subject again to her. No reasonable objection can be made to the marriage; and even were it against our wishes, Clara is of age to choose for herself—and I do not think, Miss Hamilton, it quite becomes you to interfere in the way you have done."

"I have a right to interfere, to prevent Clara disgracing the family. Pray, who was Mr Langford's father? What do you know of his family?"

"I know that his father was a gentleman of the highest respectability, with ample fortune, which, however, was entirely lost by the sudden failure of a bank. But," continued



Sir Alfred, firmly, "if his father had been a blacksmith, what difference ought it to make in our regard for his son? Mr Langford is a gentleman in mind and manner—a talented, noble-hearted, and, above all, religious man. What more can you desire?"

"I did not come here to listen to a panegyric on Mr Langford," said Miss Hamilton, sarcastically.

"You have brought it upon yourself. I had no desire to renew the subject of my niece's engagement with you," replied Sir Alfred, quietly.

"Neither will I continue it. Before I sleep this night, I shall write to my brother."

"You can do so, if you wish it; but it will make no difference. As I told you before, Clara is of age."

"That is of no consequence. She shall be made to give it up, or I renounce her for ever."

Sir Alfred vainly endeavoured to restrain a smile at this announcement, intended to be so startling.

"Why do you smile?" exclaimed Miss Hamilton, angrily.

"I must apologise. I did not intend it."

But Aunt Lydia would not be appeased. She was resolute in trying to provoke a quarrel; and broke forth into vehement expressions of anger. Sir Alfred, finding himself growing warm, rose, saying—"Good-night. I really cannot remain longer, lest I should forget who you are," and he left the room.

Meanwhile, Clara had retired to her room, after leaving her uncle, to try to collect her scattered thoughts. It was almost the first moment she had had alone since Mr Langford left her. Now that the encounter with her

aunt and uncle was over, her mind was relieved. Aunt Lydia, she knew, would oppose the marriage, and she had been uncertain as to what Sir Alfred might think ; but she felt all his objections were overcome, and he had promised to protect her from opposition. She had never felt so happy as when she read her Bible that night. She had now truly given up the world, and was henceforth to be Christ's. She turned over its sacred pages, to search for promises of success in labouring to bring wanderers home to Him. First, there was—"He that goeth forth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him ;" then "My word shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that whereunto I sent it."

"But what if we should fail to do any real good?" for a moment presented itself to Clara's mind, as she felt her own powerlessness to prosper. "How weak my faith is! 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' If we trust only in Christ, through him we shall obtain the victory; for he has said—'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!' 'Love is strong as death;' and I feel in my heart I love my Saviour. We *must* succeed. I will not doubt any more," she said, as she closed her eyes to dream of lands far away—of a husband's love—and of prospering in the great cause of the gospel.

Clara met her aunt next morning as if nothing had happened. She had quite forgiven her; but her affection was harshly repulsed, and Miss Hamilton remained silent during the meal. Sir Alfred was, as usual, gay and affectionate. After breakfast, he proposed accompanying his niece to her room, to talk over the subject of the

engagement. Gladly Clara consented, and was pleased to find that the night's reflections had fully reconciled him to the disappointment of losing her, and of the hazard he thought she might be running in leaving England. When they had talked over the plans, and settled many things, Sir Alfred proposed a walk to the school ; and on returning, they met Mr Langford, who was warmly greeted by Sir Alfred, and congratulated on the treasure he was likely to secure in his niece. Making business with the steward his plea for leaving them, he soon disappeared in an opposite direction to that he saw his niece and Mr Langford intended to pursue, and the two were left alone. Mr Langford drew Clara's arm gently within his own.

"Clara, my heart feels almost bursting with joy. You never can know how happy you have made me: I feel undeserving of it all. And your uncle, too—how kind of him not to object!"

"And why should he?" replied Clara, raising her soft blue eyes to his face.

"Because I am not what the world calls great, or rich."

"My uncle does not think of such minor considerations as these."

"No, I see not ; and his kindness shall ever meet with the most grateful return. As far as I can do it, I will make you happy."

"I know it," murmured Clara. "I feel how safely I can trust my future life to you."

He pressed her hand in silence for a moment, and then Clara said—"You have not told me where we are going."

"Did I not? I did not know. And you never asked

me ! This is real affection. What confidence you have placed in me ! India will, I hope, be our destination."

"I am so glad ! It was all uncle objected to ; but India he likes almost as well as England : he is never tired of praising it."

"There will, however, be much to bear there. We must not think the way will be smooth. There must be many difficulties, and startling ones, to contend with. We must make up our minds to bear much before our work can prosper."

"I am prepared for it ; but God will help us. We will never despair. When shall we have to go, Mr Langford ?"

"I am not Mr Langford now, Clara—am I ?"

"No, certainly you ought not to be ; but it seems strange to call you anything else."

"No, it will not. Do let me hear you say it ! What pleasure I should have in hearing it !"

She raised her eyes, with smiles, blushes, and dimples rippling over her sweet countenance, and said—"Henry, dear Henry !"

The words fell like music on his listening ear, and made every pulse beat with delight. "The sweetest sounds I have ever heard," he said, bending his head to her, and speaking in low, tender accents. "How soon can you be ready to sail ? We ought to go before the latter end of autumn."

"I shall be ready any time."

"God bless you for all your kindness, Clara ! If you knew the happiness I feel since you have promised to be my wife ! Oh ! I must indeed pray earnestly that worldly joy may not wean my heart from Christ. Earthly love I never felt before I knew you. What must heavenly be !"

"We can hardly realise it while on earth ; but I feel that I, too, must watch, lest my affections should make me forget higher, holier joys."

"Then we will both make it a subject of prayer together, and alone," replied Mr Langford.

Clara bowed her head in silence, for the tears started to her eyes as she remembered how, one by one, her earthly idols had been removed from her, lest her heart should cling too fondly to the world.

"There is one difficulty, even before we go, we must partly overcome—viz., the language of the country. Would you assist me in the study of it ? I know you are a very excellent linguist. You would help me so much if you would learn it with me."

"Indeed I will, with pleasure ; but where shall we get an instructor ?"

"There is a native in London now, who would give us lessons if you had no objection. I think he might be of great use to us."

"We must lose no time, then," replied Clara, as they parted at the Hall, Mr Langford having an engagement which prevented his having any longer time to spare.

Clara was a linguist by nature. As language was one of the easiest studies for her, and with her whole heart in the work, she was not long, after the teacher arrived, in making great progress, and being able to assist Mr Langford beyond her most sanguine expectations.

To describe the indignation of the Hamiltons when they heard of Clara's proposed marriage, and resolution to go out to India, would be impossible. Lord and Lady Cleveland happened to be with Mr and Mrs Hamilton when the

news arrived, in an indignant epistle, penned under great excitement, from Aunt Lydia. Mr Hamilton tore the letter in pieces, and swore he would prevent his niece from disgracing the family by so preposterous an act. Even the passive Mrs Hamilton roused herself to be angry, and to declare it was a most unheard-of thing for a beautiful girl to marry so much below her station, and to think of going to India ; while Kate stamped her pretty little foot, declaring her cousin should never marry Mr Langford, and go out to be eaten by cannibals. Claude alone took Clara's part, and protested she had a right to act as she pleased, and that he was firmly of opinion Sir Edward would have given his consent had he been alive, for he knew how highly he esteemed Mr Langford.

"The boy's mad," said Mr Hamilton, angrily, as Claude left the room to conceal his emotion.

A consultation now followed, in which it was at length agreed that Mr Hamilton should go down to Beech-hall at once, and use every persuasion to induce Clara to break off her engagement, and to bring Sir Alfred to agree with them.

Clara was much agitated when she heard that Mr Hamilton had arrived. She knew his errand, and she was much grieved to be the cause of so much offence to one who, however he treated his own wife and children, had invariably been kind to her. He found all his arguments were in vain. His niece was firm as a rock in refusing to yield. He threatened never to see or speak to her again. Tears stood in her eyes ; but she resolutely told him she was sorry to offend him, but no power on earth should ever induce her to break off her engagement.

Mr Hamilton angrily left the house, declaring his intention of carrying his threat into execution. This cost Clara many a bitter tear, for she loved her uncle, aunt, and cousins ; but still it was nothing compared to the loss she should feel in losing Mr Langford's love. She compared her present feelings for him with those she had had for Lord Wentworth. How different ! She now knew what deep, heartfelt love was. To give up Mr Langford would break her heart. For her former lover, a few months and the trial of parting from him was over. With Lord Wentworth, she could never have left her country, home, and friends without a pang : with him to whom she was now to be united, not a thought of pain was felt in comparison with the treasure of being beloved by him.

The morning after Mr Hamilton's departure, Aunt Lydia—finding all persuasion and threats were alike vain—formally announced her intention of leaving Beech-hall at once. As she felt Clara had so fully disgraced her family, she would not remain any longer under her roof. Clara acquiesced in this decision. The relief of being free from her aunt's presence was too great to be resisted. She offered no persuasions for her aunt to stay, though she mildly expressed her sorrow that their parting should be under such unpleasant circumstances, and asked her forgiveness for anything in which she might have displeased her. A contemptuous look was all the reply ; and Miss Hamilton quitted Beech-hall next morning, without even taking leave of her gentle niece, whose heart ached to see her aunt so unforgiving.

* * * * *

Some weeks rolled on, and August had come ; and

Clara was in a few days to be a bride. The marriage had been hastened, in order that Mr Langford might take her to spend a week with a relation in Wales, an uncle, whose age prevented him being present at the ceremony, and who was very anxious to see his nephew before they sailed, which it was now fixed they must do in September.

The marriage was quiet. Clara remembered her husband was a clergyman, and about to enter upon the still more arduous office of a missionary ; and she desired the ceremony might be performed without needless display. Simply she was attired ; even more so than when she went to her first ball—pure, spotless white, an emblem of her own transparent nature ; while she repeated the vows that bound her for ever to him she loved—firmly and inwardly resolving, by God's help, to fulfil them—to be his comfort and companion, in sickness and in health, so long as they both should live.

Great had been the joy of the people of Wilmington when they had heard that their young mistress was to become their beloved pastor's wife ; but they were not aware, until after the marriage had taken place, and the bride and bridegroom had left Wilmington for a week, to visit Mr Langford's uncle, that they were so soon to lose those to whom they had been so much attached. Mr and Mrs Langford had deputed this announcement to be made by Sir Alfred, after their departure, neither liking to witness the distress they knew it might occasion their poor friends. The rejoicings were turned into sorrow. "There will never be another like her !" "Mr Langford was a kind friend to us !" "To think of their leaving us in this

way!" were exclamations on all sides. At the end of the week, when Mr and Mrs Langford had returned, numbers of people, old and young, flocked to them, to express their sorrow at their departure, and to implore them to remain with them. All were affected. Mr Langford and Clara felt it hard to refuse, but it must be done; and though grateful for the villagers' esteem, they were obliged to tell them they could not remain.

For the next few weeks, very painful exertion was required by Clara. Her uncle was to buy Beech-hall, and there was much business to be done in getting all arranged. The old servants were told they must leave her service, or re-engage with Sir Alfred. Lewis alone was retained, though two or three others were willing gladly to have accompanied her to India; but Clara felt they must have no unnecessary incumbrance. Mr Langford could not witness without emotion the entire sacrifice his young wife was desirous to make of everything that was not absolutely desirable for them. He earnestly entreated her to retain several little luxuries she ought to have, and which she had always been accustomed to; but she would only smile and say she "could do without it. *He* did not intend to take such indulgence—why should she?" Lewis was the only exception she made to this rule. It would have broken her heart almost to have been separated from her young mistress; and Clara herself felt how necessary she was to her, from having been with her from a child. Clara appointed a suitable incumbent to the living—a friend of her husband's—who would carry on the work as he knew Mr Langford would desire. One of her last acts was to make a comfortable provision for her poor

friends, and to leave annual sums to be paid them through Mr Villiers, the new incumbent, and to commend them to her uncle's care.

The Saturday arrived previous to their departure. They were to leave Beech-hall on the Monday—Clara and her husband were taking a farewell of many a favourite nook—each spoke little. The solemn thought was in their minds, perhaps neither would ever live to see the dear old place again ; or years must have passed over their heads. How many might ere that pass away ! What changes might take place before they should again behold the fair scene around them !

"Uncle," said Clara, as Sir Alfred joined them in the evening in the garden, "do not ever let this dear little gate be removed ; so many memories crowd upon my mind when I look at it, I could not bear to think it would be taken away. If ever I live to return, I should so like to see it again !"

"And you will, I trust, dear Clara. It shall rot off, piece by piece, before I will remove it," exclaimed Sir Alfred.

"It is very kind of you. And there is another favour : spare this tree—beneath its shade I have sat many an hour with my father, or read my Bible here."

"That, too, shall stand until it falls of its own accord. Let us sit once more together under its branches," replied her uncle, leading Clara to the seat under it.

"Henry, shall we sing the evening hymn here ? May we, dear uncle ?"

"Pray, do ; I shall like to hear it."

Clara's soft, rich voice harmonised well with her hus-

band's deep bass, as together they sang those beautiful lines of Keble's :—

“Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear !
It is not night if thou be near ;
Oh ! may no earth-born tear arise
To hide thee from thy servant's eyes !

“When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,
Be my last thought—how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast !

“Abide with me from morn to eve,
For without thee I cannot live ;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without thee I dare not die !

“Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take ;
Till, in the ocean of thy love,
We lose ourselves in heaven above !”

A tear dropped from Clara's eye as the hymn concluded. Her husband passed his arm round her, and she confidently laid her head on his shoulder, and all three remained silent for a few moments. Sir Alfred broke the pause : “I know you will love her and cherish her, Langford, or I never could have consented to this separation. You must promise me you will not let her work above her strength.”

“I will promise, Sir Alfred. Clara knows how precious, how inestimably dear she is to me, and I would not permit her to labour above what she is really able to bear. Sir Alfred, I can never thank you enough for your great kindness to me, and I can never repay you—my gratitude is all I can bestow.”

“And mine, too, dear uncle ; we both are under the

deepest obligations. We shall never forget you—you will very, very often be in our thoughts."

"Thank you, my dear, kind friend, and my Clara, too. I am sure you have nothing to thank me for ; but it will be a comfort to think you will not forget me, and some time perhaps, as I am so fond of India, I shall come and see you. I am an old bachelor, and have nothing else to do—a year or two would not make much difference," Sir Alfred said, smiling.

"I wish you would ; it would be a pleasure indeed !" replied Clara.

"Now, my dear niece, we had better go in ; it is getting rather late, and you must not take cold. Moreover, you will have a painful day to-morrow, I fear ; the people will be much distressed to see you at church for the last time."

They all rose and returned to the house. Clara's and Mr Langford's hearts felt too full for utterance. The parting must be a painful one next day, besides the emotion attending service in Wilmington for the last time must call forth in Clara's mind, when she remembered she was leaving beneath its hallowed roof the remains of those she had so tenderly loved on earth, and realised the possibility that her grave might be far from them, in a stranger land. Then she remembered those beautiful lines—

"Asleep in Jesus! time nor space
Debars this precious hiding-place :
On Indian plains, or Lapland snows,
Believers find the same repose."

And she fell asleep, peacefully resigned to live or die wherever God in His mercy should see fit to place her, knowing that, at the day when He makes up His jewels,

none will be found wanting, and parted friends shall then meet again in their heavenly Father's home.

"It is now more than two years, Henry, since I first listened to those bells ringing. How different are my feelings now to what they were then! I had wandered far from the fold of the Good Shepherd. Now, I have been brought, through your means, dear Henry, to the knowledge of the truth," said Clara, as she leaned out of the window next morning to listen once more to the village bells.

"Not through my instrumentality, my dear Clara. To God, and to Him alone, be all the praise, that you have been brought, through His mercy, to see your error, and repent ere it was too late," replied Mr Langford, affectionately putting his arm round her slender figure, and leaning forward to listen with her.

"But God works by means, Henry. Far be it ever from me to attribute to the creature what can only be effected by the Almighty Creator; but He permitted you first to speak of better things to me, and so made you the instrument, in His hands, of leading me aright."

"I understand you, dearest. Yes, I am thankful, indeed, that God has so blessed my endeavours and prayers on your behalf. How little I thought, when I first reminded you of the holy duties of the Sabbath, that it was to my future wife I was then speaking! How mysterious are the ways of God! Had I known it, I should hardly have found voice to speak; but the disinterestedness I then felt, made me bold for the truth of Christ; and now we are one, not in name only, but in heart, in desire to follow the same blessed path. My feelings are too deep for utterance for all this mercy."

Clara clasped his hand in her own, and they were very happy.

In the evening, the old church of Wilmington was crowded with anxious, sorrowing faces, to hear their much loved pastor's farewell sermon. Mr Villiers read prayers ; after which Mr Langford ascended the pulpit, pale, but calm and collected. His text was from Acts xx. 24-27. There was scarcely a dry eye in the church as he reasoned with them, probably for the last time. "Though I," he said, "may never be permitted to see or speak to you again, yet you will all be often in my heart, and daily remembered in my prayers ; and though we may not meet again on earth, we must all meet at the judgment-seat of Christ. A few short years, and we shall be numbered with the dead. The place that once knew us shall know us no more. Will you not repent now while there is an accepted time—now, while salvation is so freely offered to you ? What is life ?—a vapour, a flower that withereth, a shadow ! What is it in comparison with the never-ending ages of eternity ? When thousands of years shall have passed, we shall be no nearer its termination than before ! Oh, repent now ! Let me entreat you earnestly ; for the shades of night are closing even now round many of you, and we know not how soon all may be summoned to appear before God ! 'Surely I come quickly,' says our Lord. We know not how soon. Then, delay not any longer. 'Prepare to meet thy God !' I would say to each one here present ; and my sincere prayer for you all is, that we may meet before the eternal throne, should we never be permitted to do so on earth again ! And that the blessing of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be ever with you, is the earnest desire of him who now bids you farewell ! ”

“ Amén ! ” was the response from many a bursting heart, as their minister concluded. Mr Langford seemed deeply affected, and leaned his head on the cushion most of the time the parting hymn was sung. He and Clara waited until all had left the church, after shaking hands kindly with those who crowded round to wish them good-bye. Then Mr Langford took Clara’s hand in his own, as if to lead her away.

“ Will you stay a few minutes longer, dear Henry ? ” she said, softly.

“ Certainly, as long as you wish. ”

He understood her desire—once more to look at the place beneath which rested the remains of her beloved father. They returned up the aisle together to the chancel. Clara read, for the last time, the inscription on her parents’ tombstones ; then, kneeling down on the cold stone, she breathed a short heartfelt prayer for the success of their labours, and for strength to remain faithful unto death. She then turned to her husband, and perceived he was kneeling also by her side. They rose ; and, taking her hand, he led her, for a moment, across to where Emily Neville was buried. Neither spoke, but the silent pressure of the hand shewed the unity of feeling between them.

“ We had better go now, dearest, ” said Mr Langford, gently. Clara took his arm, and they left the church.

Amid all the parting next morning, Clara bore up wonderfully well. Even when she stepped into the carriage that bore her away, she remained calm and firm,

while Sir Alfred Howard seemed deeply affected. At length the old towers of her home faded from her sight. Silently she had watched until no trace remained behind. Even the church tower—all had vanished from her view. Then for a moment she leaned back, and tears fell silently from her eyes, relieving her overcharged heart.

“My own Clara! I feel for you. It is—it must be a trial to leave your home,” said her husband, pressing the hand he held.

“No, it is no trial really—only a momentary weakness. It will pass away, Henry. I would not retract—no, not if I knew death must ensue very soon. I love the work. I glory in being able to give up all to Christ,” was the reply.

“God will reward you,” said Mr Langford, in his deep low tones; and soon all was calm again—not another tear was shed.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Spirit of Light and Truth ! to Thee
We trust them in that musing hour,
Till they, with open heart and free,
Teach all Thy Word, in all its power.

“ When foemen watch their tents by night,
And mists hang wide o'er moor and fell,
Spirit of Counsel and of Might,
Their pastoral warfare guide Thou well !”

KEBLE'S *Christian Year*.

SIXTEEN years have passed by since the events recorded in the preceding chapter. We must introduce our readers to a place well known to many—the interior of that ancient and noble time-honoured edifice, Westminster Abbey. The solemn tones of the organ are heard pealing through the lofty building, while a large congregation are assembled within its sacred walls to witness the deeply solemn ceremony about to be performed. Within the altar rails is the venerable primate of England, attended by several other bishops. The prayers are read. Then follows the collect, epistle, and gospel taken from Matt. xxviii., beginning at the 18th verse. There is something very solemnising in the tones of the bishop, as he reads the concluding verse—“ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Then follows the Creed and

sermon ; after which, he who is about to be consecrated bishop is led up to the altar by those appointed, and presented to the archbishop with these words :—" Most reverend father in God, we present unto you this godly and well-learned man, to be ordained and consecrated bishop." After the usual oath, acknowledging the Queen's supremacy, is administered, and other forms are over, the newly-elected bishop kneels down, while the archbishop and those with him lay their hands on his head, saying—" Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands ; for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and soberness." Then the archbishop solemnly delivers the Bible to the kneeling man, and says—" Give heed unto reading, exhortation, and doctrine. Think upon the things contained in this book ; be diligent in them, that the increase coming thereby may be manifest unto all men. Take heed unto thyself, and to doctrine, and be diligent in doing them ; for by so doing, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf ; feed them, devour them not. Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, seek the lost. Be so merciful that you be not too remiss ; so minister discipline that you forget not mercy, that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you may receive the never fading crown of glory, through Jesus Christ our

Lord." Surely, in the fervent "Amen!" that followed, the deep, manly voice of the newly consecrated bishop must be recognised. As he rises from his knees before receiving the communion, he is not so unlike but that he may be known again as Mr Langford, though his hair is now as white as snow, his figure more bent, his eye less bright, his face more dyed than once; but it is the same heavenly expression rests upon it—calm, benevolent, holy. There he stands humbly before his God, asking grace to fulfil the solemn vows he has uttered, while the surrounding congregation gaze upon his countenance spell-bound, as they remember his deeds of faith and labours of love. He heeds them not. He regards not the mere honour conferred upon him, feeling his own unworthiness to fill the important office he has been constrained to accept. His whole thought, his whole soul is raised to Him, whose he is, and whom he will serve with all his remaining strength so long as life shall last. And there is another group not far distant, who almost hold their breath to listen to every word uttered—a lady, with three children surrounding her. One hand rests on the shoulder of the fine, manly boy by her side. Her face is pale, and the youthfulness of beauty is gone; but traces of loveliness are there, unrivalled even by youth itself. Serene and calm, those deep violet eyes rest fondly on the newly consecrated bishop, while her heart is lifted up to God in silent prayer for blessings on his head. The service is over. The lady and her children still linger.

"Mamma, dearest mamma! why that tear?" asks the youth by her side, raising his deep blue eyes to her face.

"'Tis joy, my boy—thanksgiving to God for all His mercies to us. Edward, I never thought I should have lived to see this day; it seems as if there was nothing left to wish for on earth."

"Except that your boy may grow up like his father, and go and do likewise," replied Edward Langford, pressing his mother's hand, as they left the Abbey.

"The carriage will be here presently, mamma. Uncle Alfred has taken Emily away with him, to introduce her to Lord—— I forget his name. He said he would not be many minutes," said Alfred, the second boy, returning to his mother.

"Here they come," said Edward, as Sir Alfred Howard, leading a little girl about five years old by the hand, returns to them, accompanied by a tall, fine-looking man, between fifty and sixty years of age. A smile of pleasure passed over Clara's face as she greeted Lord Wentworth.

"Permit me to offer you my most sincere congratulations, Mrs Langford. I have never been more impressed than I have been to-day, to see one so deservedly beloved and revered promoted to so high and important an office."

"Thank you, my lord. It has indeed been a source of joy to me to see my husband so much esteemed by all," replied Clara, in a low voice.

"May I ask if both are your sons?" said Lord Wentworth, glancing at the boys by Clara's side.

"Yes; this is Edward, and that one Alfred."

"The eldest there can be no mistake about. I should have known him anywhere," replied Lord Wentworth, looking with great interest on the noble youth, so much like her he had so fondly loved.

"The carriage is here, Clara," said Sir Alfred.

"May I hope to call upon you? Where are you at present?" inquired the earl.

"We are with Lord and Lady Cleveland for a few days; then we are returning once more to Beech-hall, where we shall be for the next few months."

"Then your residence will not be there entirely?"

"Until we return to India."

"Return! I thought your health would not permit it?"

"Indeed, I trust a few months in England will be all I shall require to re-establish my health. If all is well, I shall return with my husband," replied Mrs Langford, as she took leave of the earl.

"No use waiting for the bishop, Clara. He cannot be with us for some hours to come. I sent to inquire," said Sir Alfred, smiling, as he saw Clara looking eagerly, as they stepped into the carriage.

Mr and Mrs Langford had been eminently successful in their devoted labours in India. For sixteen years untiringly they had toiled through many discouragements, overcoming every impediment in their path. They had a good reward for their labour. They saw many a wandering sheep brought home to the fold of the Good Shepherd, many a branch engrafted into the true vine, many a tree planted in the garden of the Lord, and many a bright jewel added to the diadem of the King of kings. Surely the love of Christ had constrained them, for in every difficulty they had never been discouraged, but had persevered in the course they had chosen. Edward and Alfred had been sent to England some years before, where

they had been residing at Beech-hall with their tutor ; and Sir Alfred had employed much of his time with them, loving them as a father. Little Emily, the youngest, had only come to England with her parents. It had been a bitter trial to Clara to part from her boys, for she had feared they might never meet again. At length, the bishopric of the diocese in which they had so long laboured became vacant ; and it was offered to Mr Langford, in consideration of his important and faithful labours. Long had he hesitated to accept it, fearing to add to his responsibility ; but earnest solicitations prevailed, and he returned to England with Clara and his little girl for some months.

Lady Cleveland's resentment had quite worn away at her cousin's marriage, and she was one of the first affectionately to greet Clara on her return, and earnestly to entreat they would make their home in Grosvenor Square so long as they remained in London. Sir Alfred had, however, the first claim, and they had been residing with him in London since their arrival, until a day or two before Mr Langford's consecration. With what joy did Clara once more meet those she had loved so well ! Merry, dancing Kate—how unchanged she was in her ardent, affectionate nature, surrounded by her happy little band of seven children ; while she tried to look matronly and old before Clara, who only possessed three. And Lord Cleveland, the same happy, amiable man, who, after tasting the pleasures of the world fully, had for ever left them, and found in his home the greatest delight ; and in the mirth of his children, his joy and pride.

But, though seeing old friends was very pleasant to



Clara, she longed once more to visit dear Wilmington and her former home, and all those in whose welfare she had taken so great an interest. An early day was fixed for their return there. How different were her feelings on again seeing the view of the church and Hall! She had left it in doubt and uncertainty as to their success; now she returned with the blessed assurance they had been the means of turning many to righteousness in that far distant land, whose people had grown as dear to her as her own.

To describe the sensation among the villagers, when they heard their once-loved pastor, and their dear young lady (as they still called Clara), were coming to visit them again, would be impossible. Triumphal arches, banners, music, with groups of people in their holiday dress, were seen on all sides, as they drew near the village. They accompanied the carriage to the Hall, it being impossible to restrain them from following the travellers, who so kindly thanked them for their welcome.

"You are not forgotten, and you never will be, so long as a creature who knew you lives in Wilmington," said Sir Alfred to his niece, when they entered the fine old drawing-room of Beech-hall.

"How unchanged all looks! Dear uncle, it seems but yesterday since we left," said Clara.

"And my own mamma's sitting-room is mine—all mine! Uncle appropriated it to me when we came; and you cannot think how I love it for your sake. And you will come and sit with me in it—will you not, dearest mother?" said Edward Langford, putting his arm lovingly round his mother.

"Will I not, my boy, indeed?" replied Clara, kissing his fine open forehead, and stroking back fondly the rich curls from his brow.

"And mamma will come and see my room, too! Edward always claims mamma first," said Alfred, smiling.

"And will no one ask *me* to come and see their rooms?" said the bishop, who just then had entered.

"Yes, indeed we will, papa; but you will not have such an interest in the house as mamma had," replied the boys.

"Oh, but I shall. Whatever interests you will be sure to give me pleasure," replied the father, kindly.

"There, we must go now, or we shall be late for dinner. We must see your treasures afterwards, my dears," said Clara, kissing them, and retiring.

"How kind of uncle! Henry, do you remember the last Sunday morning, when we looked out of this window? He remembers all we like so much; and how good to give the boys so much pleasure in the use of my rooms!"

"It is, indeed. Ah, Clara, how much we have to be thankful for! We neither of us thought we should have seen this place again," said her husband, taking Clara's hand in his own.

She threw her arms round his neck. "No, Henry, we never did. And how little we dreamed of you being a bishop, either!"

"I tremble when I think of it! May it please God to grant me His grace, that I may indeed feed the flock of Christ as I ought! I am not worthy to have so important an office."

Clara gazed on his mild, benevolent face, so softened in its expression, and felt surely none was so fitted for the important post as he was ; but she spoke not. She knew him too well to suppose he would have pleasure in her thinking him so good a man, regarding himself, as he always did, as the chief of sinners—a monument of the long-suffering of God.

“I have something to tell you that I am sure will give you pleasure, dear Clara. I received a note from the bishop of this diocese, asking me if I should like, knowing my associations with this place so well, to take a confirmation there is to be here in a few weeks. Need I tell you how much pleasure this has given me !”

Clara’s eyes beamed with delight. “That will be very pleasant. I wonder if any one I remember will be a candidate.”

“I daresay there will. I shall see Mr Villiers to-morrow about it.”

* * * * *

“Where does that little gate lead to, mamma ?” asked little Emily, in the evening, as they all walked into the garden.

“To the village, my dear. I can remember that path before I was your age.”

The child looked up wonderingly, to try to conceive her mamma having ever been a little girl like herself. Clara leaned over the little white gate once more, and listened again to the rippling of the brook. As she turned round, her hand was taken by Edward, who gently drew her away, and led her through the glass doors to her own room. Placing a chair for her, he knelt by her side.

"Talk to me again, mamma : tell me about the way to heaven. I love my Saviour now. I wish to be like him more and more," he said, affectionately.

"Thank God, my boy, my prayers are heard on your behalf. Now, tell me, Edward, have you always read your Bible as you used to do with me?"

"Yes, dear mamma. Here is the one you gave me ; and here is my name in your writing ; and here are the marks I told you I had made when we were in London together. Whenever I have been tempted to stray from the right path, or not to love my Bible so well, my own dear mother's voice has sounded in my ears. Those prayers you used to teach me have never faded from my memory, and I trust they never will."

"My dear, dear boy !" were the mother's words, as she clasped the noble youth to her heart.

"I have sat in this little room many hours, thinking of you and papa, and praying for you ; and if it pleases God, mamma, I will be a missionary too, and carry on the work papa has begun. May I not ?"

"Nothing could give us more real pleasure, Edward. Your father and I have prayed much for you all ; and our prayers, I trust, are to be fulfilled, not in you only, but in Alfred and Emily. Edward, my boy, you are older than they are. When we have both gone, you must try to teach and lead them in the right way. Alfred is merry and light-hearted, and apt to be less serious than I could wish sometimes ; while Emily clings to us so tenderly, I fear it will almost break her little heart to part from us again. You must endeavour to make up for our loss. You must teach her to love her Saviour, and try to supply

our place to them both, as far as you can. I am sure you will."

"I will, my dear mamma, though it will be a bitter thing to me to lose you again; but I will struggle with my grief for your sakes."

"Here's Edward stolen mamma again, papa: it is really too bad!" exclaimed Alfred, bursting into the room, followed by his father and Emily.

"I shall be quite jealous, Eddie, if you take mamma away from us so much," said the bishop, smiling, and laying his hand on Edward's shoulder kindly.

"You need never be that, papa," replied Edward, raising his eyes to his father's face, and smiling too.

"My boy! you are your mother's image. How like you, Clara, he did look just then!" exclaimed the father, gazing at Edward. The boy's cheek flushed with pleasure.

"Now, my children, this is the first time we have ever been really alone. We meet here once more after sixteen years' absence, in what was once your dear mother's room—what ought we to do?"

"Thank God for it," replied Edward, in a low voice.

"Right, Edward. Then let us kneel down together, and praise our heavenly Father for all His mercies," replied his father, taking little Emily's hand.

The parents and children together knelt before the throne of grace to thank God for all His mercies, and to pray for a continuance of His almighty protection.

When they rose from their knees, little Emily, climbing on her father's knee, whispered, "Papa, I do love Jesus—I am sure I do."

"And may he bless you, my darling, and make you one

of the lambs of his fold," he said, as she wished good-night, and followed her nurse, who had just come to fetch her.

"Oh, Henry, I have had so pleasing an assurance about dear Edward!" said Clara, when the two boys had retired also.

"I am truly glad to hear it, Clara."

"He has not forgotten our prayers. Surely God has blessed us. I trust he is really walking in the right way. Here is his Bible, which he has marked in many places. I must tell you more afterwards; but we have already left uncle a very long time. He will wonder what has become of us," said Clara.

A few weeks more, and the Bishop of S—— had the satisfaction of receiving and confirming many members of his former flock in the old church of Wilmington. Seldom, perhaps, had that solemn service been more impressively read than by him who now laid his hands upon so many he had left as mere children, and to whom, in the Sunday school, he had so often taught the truth as it is in Jesus. Clara recognised three of her former Sunday scholars, one of whom was the child she had been accustomed to call "little Eve," because she had thought Eve was the first man. She had now grown a fine, tall girl, and had become a teacher in the school, and was much esteemed by Mr Villiers. The bishop's exhortation will not soon be forgotten by those who were then confirmed. He always took so great an interest in the young, that this was a subject on which he could speak with more than ordinary force. Solemnly and affectionately he pleaded with them, that they would keep those vows they had then taken, to become Christ's, and to give up the world.

Simply, but forcibly, he explained its pomps and vanity, and urged them to come to Jesus now in the days of their youth—reminding them of those blessed promises of God to those who seek Him early, and who take Him for the guide of their youth.

The service was over, and Clara and her children were leaving the churchyard, when little Emily, who had hold of her hand, said—"Mamma, Eddie told me about the little girl you used to love, and who died when she was only as old as me. He said her grave was in the churchyard. May we go and see it?"

"Yes, dear, certainly. Little Ellen was a good little girl, and is now in heaven as the angels. I hope my dear Emily will try to love Jesus as much as she did," said Clara, taking her to the little grassy mound beneath which Ellen Ward was buried.

"Can Emily read what is written there on the tombstone?" said her mother.

"Yes, mamma. 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven ;' 'Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,'" the little girl read slowly.

"Yes, Jesus loves little children ; and he took little Ellen when she was only a few months older than you, Emily ; but she wished to go to be with him. I hope you will be like her in desiring always to love Christ better than any one else."

"Yes, mamma, even better than you and papa, you said once?"

"Yes, better, far better than us, dear."

"See, mamma, the violets Edward and I planted under the willow. Eddie said you loved that little girl, so we

put the sweetest flowers there. There are primroses, snow-drops, and lilies in spring, and these violets have lasted longer than any ; and we like them so much, they smell so sweet, and Uncle Alfred said they were the colour of your eyes, mamma, and so we loved them more than ever," said Alfred.

"It was very kind of you, I am sure, to put the flowers there. They look very beautiful, and are emblems of little Ellen herself. Can you tell me why, Ally?"

"I think I can, mamma. They die in winter, or seem to do so ; and then, in spring, they bloom again, and live. So when any one dies that is good, they are put into the grave ; but they shall rise again in greater beauty, and be with Jesus Christ for ever in heaven," replied Alfred.

"Quite right, dear. Now, gather me a violet, and then we must go home," said Clara, kindly.

* * * * *

Little now remains to be told. The few months the Bishop of S—— was to remain in England had elapsed, and preparations had to be made for the departure. Mrs Langford's health was very far from being re-established ; but her resolution was taken, and no persuasions could induce her to remain after her husband in England. Ever fearful of her health, he would have had her take longer rest, and remain another year with the children they so tenderly loved ; but her reply had been, was he not dearer to her than all besides ? Could she be content to let him return alone to labour ? No. She would ever be with him, so long as her life was spared, to assist him in all those duties he had taken upon himself. Surely her husband thought her more than human—something between

a woman and an angel. No sacrifice was too great, no difficulty too hard to be surmounted. She loved him and his Master's work too well to think of quitting her post now ; and she was resolved to return, still to labour in the glorious work.

On their way through London, once more they saw Lord Wentworth ; and an opportunity offered itself of his telling Clara of how much use the Bible she had given him had been—that it was now his daily study—and he trusted, through the grace of God, he was now a Christian in deed as well as in name. It was a great comfort to Clara to feel that, individually, she had been the means of inducing one she esteemed so highly to come to the knowledge of the truth. Henceforth his whole energies were to be expended in doing good, and in endeavouring to bring others to Christ.

A word more, and we have done.

The design of this story has not been to while away an idle hour merely. It has had a far higher object in view—to prove that, in joy or sorrow, the Christian is ever the happiest upon earth ; for in all, he has a Saviour to support him, and a sure and certain hope of glory hereafter. And though few may be called to make the sacrifices Clara Howard did, yet the true believer will ever be ready and willing to give up *all* for Christ, if it be his will. That it is also the duty of those who have been called to the knowledge of the truth, to endeavour to induce others to join them in seeking after their salvation with earnestness and zeal, for the time is short. There is a work for all to do, and a great one, too ; though it is by no means the duty of every one, or indeed of many, to become missionaries,

yet in every place, in every situation, wherever we are, whomever we are with, there is a work for Christ. No opportunity should be lost. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Oh, let each one labour while there is yet time! If no work for God has been discovered, the heart cannot be right before Him. Let each one earnestly seek to find something to do for Him, remembering that they who are faithful unto death shall not fail to obtain that crown of glory which God has promised, for the sake of Christ, to all those who live and labour for Him. "And that they which be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they which turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever!"

THE END.

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